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HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

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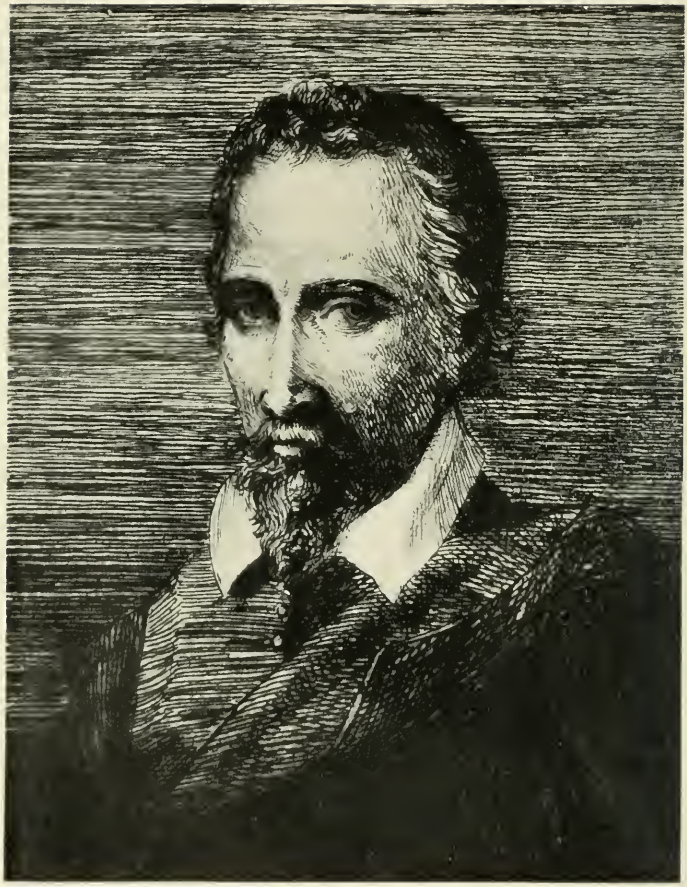
MICHAEL SERVETUS

His Life and Teachings



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MICHAEL SERVETUS

His Life and Teachings

BY

CARL THEOPHILUS ODHNER

PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY, ACADEMY OF THE NEW CHURCH, BRYN ATHYN, PA.

"One truth from an enemy is worth more than a hundred lies from our friends"

—SERVETUS

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MICHAEL SERVETUS

His Life and Teachings

PART I.

SERVETUS AND CALVIN.

1. SERVETUS IN MODERN LITERATURE.

The recent celebrations of the four hundredth anniversary of Calvin's birth have once more brought to public notice his treatment of Michael Servetus, the Spanish physician and reformer. Catholic and Protestant foes of Calvinism have gleefully pointed to the auto-da-fé in Geneva as evidence of Calvin's fanaticism and cruelty; it has been a pleasure, evidently, to rub the salt of this case into the one ever open sore of the Calvinistic brethren.

The latter, while regretfully admitting "the one great error" of their otherwise immaculate leader, have now, as ever before, endeavored to shield his memory behind the "barbarous age in which he lived," and some of his modern apologists have frankly admitted that they themselves would have done as Calvin did, had they lived in the sixteenth

century. Moreover, did not the Calvinists atone sufficiently for the fault of their theologian, when in the year 1903 they erected at Geneva a "*monument expiatoire*" to Michael Servetus, recording the fact that it was raised by "sons of Calvin, full of respect and recognition of our great reformer, but condemning one error which was the error of his age"? Unfortunately for the apologists, the fact remains that this "one error" of Calvin's was quite unique in the whole Protestant world even in that "barbarous age."

For Michael Servetus himself the Calvinists of to-day have as little love as did Calvin himself. The latter burned the body of Servetus; the former are still burning his character and teachings by repeating the slanders originally invented by Calvin. Even so temperate a journal as the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA is not ashamed to denounce Servetus as "a persistent liar, a foul reviler, and at the best a vain dreamer." (Oct., 1909, p. 679.)

Much, indeed, has been written about Servetus, yet little is known concerning his real teachings.* Socinians and Unitarians have claimed him as a martyr in their cause, seizing only upon his arguments in denial of a Trinity of Persons but ignoring his sublime faith in the sole and complete Divinity

* None of his works have been translated into English, and the few remaining copies of the originals, and even of the reprints, are almost inaccessible.

of Jesus Christ. The only available biography of Servetus in the English language, SERVETUS AND CALVIN (London, 1876), is by a Unitarian, Dr. Robert Willis, who has the hardihood to assert that Servetus was an Arian who moreover denied the life after this! The work is worthless from a theological point of view, but is of great value as unbiased history. The portrait of Servetus in the present treatise is copied from the frontispiece in the work of Dr. Willis. The history of this portrait is given in Allwoerden's HISTORIA MICHAELIS SERVETI (1727), where it is stated that it was originally drawn by a friend who visited Servetus in his prison in Geneva (p. 147). It was engraved in copper at Amsterdam 1607. (See the LIFE OF SERVETUS by J. G. de Chauffpié, London, 1771, p. 61.)

The most recent contribution to the literature on Servetus is a paper by Prof. Ephraim Emerton in the HARVARD THEOLOGICAL REVIEW for April, 1909. This writer admits that "there has not yet appeared any one successful effort to unravel the mystery of Servetus' life and thought." "His manner of expressing himself is confusing and intricate to the last degree, so much so that neither in his own time, nor since, has any one quite dared to say that he understood it." Prof. Emerton certainly has not been successful in grasping even the central idea of the Servetan theology, since he commits such gross errors as to maintain that Servetus "declared that

Christ was not consubstantial and co-eternal with God," and that "like his great forerunner, Arius, he was willing to accept almost any description of the divine perfections of the redeeming Christ,—only he would not admit the thought of his eternal existence"!

In Germany, however, more serious and impartial efforts have been made to investigate the theological system of Michael Servetus. We refer to the volume on MICHAEL SERVET UND SEINE VORGÄNGER, by F. Trechsel (Heidelberg, 1839, pp. 328), a very fair and systematic study of Servetus' own works; and more especially the three volumes on DAS LEHRSYSTEM MICHAEL SERVET'S, by the late Henri Tollin (Gütersloh, 1876–1878). The latter, a pastor of the French Protestant Church in Magdeburg, seems to have devoted his whole life to the study and defense of Servetus, writing a series of not less than twenty-one different volumes, pamphlets, and monographs, dealing with this subject. His LEHRSYSTEM is really a most remarkable work, written with a warm-hearted sympathy hardly to be expected from a Lutheran theologian. It is, in fact, a complete compendium of the works of Servetus, consisting largely of quotations in free German rendering, with the original Latin sentences as footnotes. Tollin himself is so unsparing in his denunciation of the fundamental falsities of the Old Theology, that one might almost suspect him of being a secret Swedenborgian.

There is no direct evidence, however, of his having read the Writings of Swedenborg.

In the New Church the interest in Michael Servetus dates from the time when the late Rev. Louis H. Tafel published an account of "Calvin and Servetus" in the last issue of WORDS FOR THE NEW CHURCH (Philadelphia, 1886). This writer, after an independent but somewhat cursory study of the original works of Servetus, came to the conclusion that the latter, "with the exception of some minor and unimportant errors, as, *e.g.*, his belief in the revolt of angels and his rejection of infant baptism, represents quite fully as to his general teaching the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem, viz.: God in Christ, and the conjunction of Faith and Charity; and with the exceptions mentioned above, the doctrines taught by Servetus are in general agreement with those enunciated in their fulness, and with innumerable particulars, by the Lord at His Second Coming."

The remarkable extent of this agreement was not, however, realized by us until we took up the present study of the theology of Michael Servetus.

2. THE FAILURE OF THE REFORMATION.

The ends of Providence in sending to the world a man such as Servetus may to some extent be perceived in the light of the interior historical sense of the Word. In DANIEL 9: 27 we read the prophecy

that the Messiah "*shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall cause to cease the sacrifice and the oblation, until at last desolation shall come upon the bird of abomination, even until the consummation, and the decision shall drop upon the devastation.*"

By this "one week," we are told by Swedenborg in the APOCALYPSE EXPLAINED, n. 684, "is meant the time of the Reformation, when again there would be reading of the Word and acknowledgment of the Divine in the Human of the Lord. But that 'in the middle of the week He shall cause to cease the sacrifice and the oblation,' signifies that still, interiorly with the Reformed, there would not be truth and good in their worship, and this for the reason that they had assumed faith as the essential of the Church, and had separated it from charity." He states, further, in the BRIEF EXPOSITION, n. 21, that "the leading Reformers retained all the dogmas such as they were and had been with the Roman Catholics, but they separated charity and good works from that faith and declared them to be not conjointly saving, in order that they might tear themselves asunder from the Roman Catholics."

As far as Theology was concerned, the Reformers cleansed nothing but the outside of the cups and the platters of the ruined Christian Church in which the "bird of abomination" had made its nest. Not one of the fundamental falsities introduced by the

Council of Nicæa was as much as touched by the Reformers. The dogmas which had divided the One God into three equally Divine persons, and which had separated the Divine and the Human of the One God-Man into two natures forever distinct and unblendable, these reason-killing mystifications of the Athanasian Creed remained in full force in the Protestant Church, and with them all the rest of the Greek and Roman fictions—such as the doctrine of original sin, the vicarious atonement, the imputation of the merit of Christ, etc. Not one step forward was taken by the Reformed Theology, from the time of Luther and his fellow confessionalists until the day when finally "the decision dropped upon the devastation" in the Last Judgment which took place in the spiritual world in the year 1757.

In the "*middle* of the week"—*i.e.,* as to the *interior* quality of its state—the Reformation proved itself a failure. It indeed brought forth the Word of God out of the prison-house into which it had been thrust by the Church, but it was a blind Sampson, a Bible obscured by false interpretations, which the Reformers now set to work to grind out dogmas in their new theological mill. Chief of these dogmas was the doctrine of instantaneous salvation by faith alone without the need of charity or good works. And this fountainhead of heresy quickly gave birth to the doctrine of Predestination. For, so Calvin reasoned with infernal logic, if man has no free will

in spiritual things, if he cannot even procure faith for himself but receives it by the grace of God alone, it follows inevitably that the grace of God is extended only to those few favorites or elect who do receive the saving faith. Luther and Melanchthon shuddered at this Frankenstein born from their own pet dogma. Theological controversies immediately followed on this and other subjects. Charity, being of no consequence in the Protestant scheme of salvation, was thrown to the winds. The Protestant movement was split up into hostile camps which, even in the face of overwhelming common danger, could never be brought together for a single common purpose. Henceforth the Lutheran Church, and the Reformed Church, and the Anglican Church, were "anathema maranatha" one to the other, while the Beast at Rome gleefully licked his bloody chops.

And such as the Clergy, such the Laity! For centuries the Protestant nations have fought each other just as if they had no common spiritual cause. Religion, of course, has nothing to do with Politics,—nor with private life, for that matter,—since Religion consists in Faith alone! Has this their Faith made Protestants more sincerely religious than the great mass of Roman Catholics? More self-sacrificing, more temperate, more chaste, more truthful, more pure in life and conduct? "By their fruits ye shall know them."

3. A GENUINE REFORMATION OFFERED THROUGH SERVETUS.

Yet neither the Reformation, nor the Christian Church as a whole, was predestined to failure by the all-merciful Providence of God, but both were intended to restore the Garden of God to the earth. The Christian Church *could* have come into a greater light and a consequent greater charity, *if Christians had been willing.* The Lord who in His very last words on earth had told His disciples: "Behold, I am with you all days until the Consummation of the Age"—this same Lord was ever standing at the closed door of His Church, knocking, knocking, but not admitted. The Church was willing enough to admit the heathenism of Egypt with its triads of gods, resulting in the "Christian" doctrine of three Divine persons; the heathenism of Carthage with its infant sacrifices, resulting in the "Christian" doctrine of the Vicarious Atonement by the bloody sacrifice of the innocent Son of God; the heathenism of Imperial Rome with its unquenchable lust of world-dominion, resulting in the "Christian" claims and practices of Papacy. But for the plain and simple teachings of the Gentle Shepherd, by whose Holy Name this Church dared to call itself, there was no room.

Still the forsaken Lord did not forsake His Church, but sent prophet after prophet to His faithless husbandmen, bearing messages from Him of

instruction, protest, warning, and reproof. Throughout the Dark Ages He raised up an almost continuous chain of illumined and fearless teachers,—known to Church History as "Reformers before the Reformation,"—through whom the Church might have been led to become a Heaven instead of a hell upon earth. Among the first of these special messengers was ORIGEN, the greatest and most spiritually-minded of all the ancient Fathers; through him the seven-sealed Book was *almost* opened. And the last and greatest of all was MICHAEL SERVETUS, through whom the Lord of the Church extended an opportunity for the Reformation to become not only a Reform but an actual *Restoration* of the Christian Church. But this opportunity was rejected, like all the preceding offers of salvation. Some of the prophets had been stoned, some tortured, drawn and quartered, and others, like Savonarola and Servetus, were sacrificed as burnt offerings on the altar of Satan.

More than any of the other reformers,—whether before, during, or after the Reformation itself,—Servetus thoroughly appreciated the spiritually corrupt and vastated condition of the Christian Church. As will be seen by extracts from his own works, he realized that the source of the corruption was a false idea of God, introduced as early as the Council of Nicæa when "the Godhead was divided into three persons with one nature, and Christ divided into two

natures in one person." This mystical doctrine was left untouched by the German reformers, but Servetus insisted that there could be no real Reformation until the primary proposition of the Christian Religion had been reconsidered and brought into harmony with the plain teachings of Scripture and the imperative demands of human reason. It was not enough, he urged, to lop off a few of the most unsightly branches of ecclesiastical polity and custom; the tree itself was rotten and should be hewn down in order to make room for a new tree planted upon the Word of God alone. To this radical work he felt himself called "through a certain Divine impulse." [1] The real Reformation, therefore, was yet to come, all previous attempts being at the best only a preparation for the future great work. And he himself, he confessed, was only a forerunner, one of the earliest champions in the coming great battle of Armageddon for the establishment of a new and genuine Church. Regarding Christianity as *primarily* a system of Doctrine,—since men could not possibly do what is right unless they were taught what is right,—Servetus of course was immediately condemned as a mere "doctrinaire," a conceited and unpractical person of "rampant self-assertion," "incapable, from the tendency of his mind, of admitting the importance of the element of practical ethics in the scheme of Christianity," etc. (McClin-

[1] R=Christianismi Restitutio p. 4.

tock & Strong's THEOLOGICAL CYCLOPÆDIA, vol. ix, p. 590).

How far from the truth is this estimate of Servetus will be seen in our account of his doctrine of faith and charity. We think his appreciation of "practical ethics" will compare favorably with Luther's advice to Melanchthon:

> "Remain thou a sinner, and sin bravely but confide and rejoice still more bravely in Christ. As long as we are here we must sin. This life is not the habitation of righteousness. It is enough that we, by the treasure of grace, acknowledge the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. From this the sin shall not tear us loose, even if we a thousand and a thousand times a day, commit fornication and murder." (Luther's EPISTLES. Vol. I. Jena, 1556, p. 345.)

4. THE LIFE AND WORK OF SERVETUS.

The chief purpose of the present treatise is to bring out a systematic view of the theological doctrines of Servetus, and we must therefore confine our account of his life to a few general outlines. Michael Servetus was a Spaniard, born of a good family at Villanueva, Aragon, in the year 1509 (or 1511). Of his childhood nothing is known, but he is said to have entered the university of Saragossa at the age of fourteen years. Being an intellectual prodigy he rapidly acquired such a knowledge of Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic that on account of his linguistic proficiency he was at the age of seventeen appointed secretary to Quintana, the father-confessor of Em-

peror Charles V. In this capacity he was present at the imperial coronation at Bologna, in 1529, where he became acquainted with the papal court in all its splendor and corruption. Soon afterwards he accompanied Quintana to the great Diet at Augsburg where the Reformers presented their famous "Confession," and he thus enjoyed the opportunity of studying at close range the representative men and principles of the great ecclesiastical controversy then raging. Evidently Servetus was disgusted with both parties, or was becoming known as a theological malcontent, for we learn that he left the service of Quintana in the year 1530 and betook himself to the university of Toulouse. Here he entered deeply into the study of Jurisprudence and Theology, and here for the first time he found the Word of God in the original. This proved the turning point of his life. He says he "read a thousand times this book from Heaven which treats of Christ alone," and in his reading the youthful student was gifted with a most marvellous light, enabling him to discern at a glance the genuine principles of universal Christian Theology. Throwing overboard the whole mass of œcumenical dogmatism, medieval scholasticism and modern confessionalism, Servetus refused to be taught anything but the doctrines of the Bible itself, so profound yet after all so simple when once Jesus Christ is recognized as the universal subject of the whole of Scripture. An entirely new conception of Theology was

born in his mind, a system which in all its essential features remained unchanged with him to the end of his days; this system he now committed to paper and published under his own name at Hagenau, near Basel, in the year 1531, under the title De Trinitatis Erroribus (on the errors in respect to the Trinity).*

The appearance of this little volume was received at first with some degree of tolerance by the reformers. Oecolampadius (with whom Servetus had come in personal contact at Basel), while fundamentally disagreeing with the author, stated that the book "contains much that is good," and Melanchthon wrote that he "read Servetus a good deal," and foresaw great future controversies on the subjects involved. Further study of the book soon convinced

* De Trinitatis Erroribus Libri Septem. *Per Michaelem Servetum alias Reves ab Arragonia Hispanum. Anno MDXXXI.* (small 8vo, pp. 120, the leaves instead of the pages being numbered). Copies of the original edition are exceedingly rare. A facsimile edition, counterfeiting the original, was published in Holland about the year 1620. It differs from the original by a single misprint (p. 83 *b*). A copy of this edition, which is almost as rare as the original, is preserved in the library of the Academy of the New Church at Bryn Athyn, Pa. It contains, as an appendix, the Dialogorum de Trinitate Libri Duo, by Servetus, and his Institia Regni Christi, Capitula Quatuor, (pp. 94). The volume is bound in a leaf of parchment taken from an illuminated Missal of the Middle Ages containing the words and musical notes of a chant reading: "*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus. Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritu Sancto.*" It was purchased at Amsterdam by the Rev. W. H. Benade in the year 1878.

the theologians of its radical and dangerous character,—dangerous alike to Protestants and Catholics. The Roman Church was here identified with the "woman in scarlet," and with the Babylon that was about to be destroyed. (*"O bestia bestiarum, meretrix sceleratissima!"* The mendicant monk he compared to a devouring locust. "The locust has by nature a sort of monk's cowl; add to this a wallet, and you have a begging friar complete, in other words, a hooded devil.") This was sufficient for the monk Quintana, the quondam patron of Servetus, to secure the promulgation of an imperial edict forbidding the work and ordering its destruction everywhere. The reformers, on the other hand, were infuriated at its unsparing and unanswerable arguments against the doctrines upon which they had based their sole hope of salvation: the Vicarious Atonement, and Faith Alone. With one voice they cried out against it, and Martin Bucer, the "gentle" reformer of Strassburg, "the peace-maker of the Reformation," publicly declared that such a man as Servetus "ought to be disemboweled and torn to pieces" (*avulsis visceribus discerperetur*).

Small wonder that the Christian world arose as one man to crush this stripling theologian of twenty-one, who, armed with Scripture alone, had dared to attack in its very stronghold the "faith once delivered" by the fathers, the faith established by majority votes and anathemas at the great and holy Œcu-

menical Councils, where inspired bishops fought each other *literally* tooth and nail, until the great "mystery" of the tripersonal Godhead had been triumphantly established upon the ruins of a dead Church.

"Infinitely great," declares Servetus in his first book, "has been the injury brought upon the Christian Church by this dogma of Tritheism. Innumerable heresies and monstrous notions have sprung from it, and within the Church it has given birth to the most marvellous doctrines and thousands of inexplicable, hairsplitting and unreasonable problems." [2] "These insanities and phantasies have not only been the objects of ridicule for Jews and Mohammedans, but they have also constituted the chief obstacles to the conversion of these people to the Christian faith. It would be wise to listen to Mohammed's own declaration, *for one truth from an enemy is worth more than a hundred lies from our friends.*" [3] "Mohammed expressly declares that Christ was the greatest of all prophets, a spirit, a force, nay, the soul of God Himself, the Word born by a virgin through the Divine Breath; and he declares that the Jews had deserved the misery which had come upon them on account of their unfaith and the wickedness they had done to Christ." [4] "For all this philosophic noise and corruption we have to thank the Greeks at

[2] E=De Trin. Erroribus, 38 *a* (=first page of the 38th leaf).

[3] E. 42 *b*.

[4] E. 43 *a*.

the Great Councils; but of what authority is the witness of a Church that has fallen from the true foundation of faith? A Church wherein the members no longer know Christ, but are filled with the spirit of rapine and inchastity instead of the Holy Spirit?" [5]

Having rejected the doctrine of three Divine persons, Servetus next strikes at the other great pillar in the house of the Philistines: the Protestant doctrine of Justification.

"It is not faith in the *merit* of Christ," he says, "that justifies a man, for neither the merit nor the fault of one person can be transferred to another person, but it is the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ *as* the Son of God. Having departed from this one foundation of faith, the Lutherans do not understand what justification is. But even this faith in Christ does not justify without the positive element of love or charity. The faith alone of the Lutherans is empty, vain, and monstrous, good for nothing but to make men spiritually lazy and torpid. It is impossible to understand why Lutherans should urge men to charity, when nevertheless they do not ascribe any uses to charity, since they declare that all good works contribute nothing to salvation." [6]

It is not to be thought, however, that Servetus merely contented himself with the negation of the two fundamental falsities of the Old Theology; on

[5] E. 43 *b*. [6] E. 99 *a*.

the contrary, his whole effort was to reconstruct a positive Christian Theology on the basis of Sacred Scripture, and on it alone. We will not attempt, now, to outline his actual system, but will consider it as a whole in connection with his last and greatest work, the RESTITUTION OF CHRISTIANITY. Suffice it to state here simply that the Lord Jesus Christ was to him not only the centre but the whole of all Scripture, of all Theology, and of all Religion. Christ is the eternal Word made Flesh. The Word of God is God Himself. Therefore Christ is God Himself, the only God, the one and only Person of the Godhead, for in Him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily. This is the theology of Servetus in a nutshell.

Oecolampadius and the other theological authorities in Basel, where Servetus resided at this time, now threatened him with expulsion from the city and promptly confiscated all copies of his book within their reach. Servetus promised to write a retraction of his "errors," and in 1532 published a new little work, entitled TWO DIALOGUES CONCERNING THE TRINITY. In the preface he declares that he takes back everything he had formerly written on the subject of the Trinity, but, he adds, "not as being false, but as imperfect and as it were written by a boy to boys." He then proceeds to "retract" his former teachings by asserting them more vigorously than ever, declaring that he had been encour-

aged to do so by the fact that his adversaries had not been able to bring against him one single passage of Scripture. The personal union of the Father and the Son, of the Divine and the Human in the one substance of Jesus Christ, is exhibited in even clearer light than before. He further emphasizes the freedom of the human will and the absolute necessity of charity and good works for the sake of salvation, and he closes with a fervid prayer for the speedy coming of the time when there would be freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. "May the Lord destroy all the tyrants of the Church. Amen."

Realizing that he no longer could hope to influence the German reformers, Servetus now withdrew to Paris where, under the assumed name of Villeneuve (the name of his native town in Spain), he took up the study of Philosophy, Mathematics, and Medicine at the Sorbonne. Two years later he accepted a position as proofreader and editor with a publishing house at Lyons, returning to Paris in 1537 in order to resume his medical studies. The authorities were quick to recognize his unusual talents, graduated him in 1538 and invited him to deliver a course of lectures on Geography, Mathematics and Astronomy. His lectures were highly popular and were attended by many high dignitaries, but his love of truth, lack of caution, and, possibly, a native love of fighting, soon brought him into trouble. Having accused the medical profession as a

whole of being "the plague of the world" because of their gross ignorance of Nature and natural law, the whole university was stirred into commotion. The medical faculty accused him of having mixed Astrology into his lectures on Astronomy; the theological faculty supported him, however, and Servetus managed to escape further persecution, after having received a severe "warning."

After his graduation as Doctor of Medicine, Servetus found a patron in the Archbishop of Vienne, in Dauphiné, and under the protection of this powerful friend he remained in Vienne as a practising physician for twelve or thirteen years, acquiring a lucrative practice and many friends. Theology, however, still remained his dearest love, and in the year 1542 he brought out a new and annotated edition of Pagnini's Latin version of the Bible. In the preface he teaches that there is a twofold meaning in the Word of God,—one a literal-historical sense, and the other an internal spiritual sense which everywhere refers to Christ and His Kingdom. In his marginal notes, especially to the Psalms and the Prophets, he suggests interpretations of the Messianic passages in the light of the history of Biblical times, and then carries them over to Christ in the higher or spiritual sense. *On this account alone* the edition was placed on the "Index Prohibitorum" by the Catholic theologians. Personally, he remained unmolested and in freedom to turn his attention once more to the

ideal of his youth, the radical, spiritual Reformation of the Christian Church. From the German reformers he could not hope for coöperation in this work, but CALVIN'S more logical form of mind seemed to hold out a more attractive prospect. If Calvin could be persuaded to reconsider his premises, there might be some hope. To Calvin, therefore, he turned, opening a correspondence that proved fatal, in the end, to the trustful Servetus. Disdaining flattery and forgetting "the deference due" to the uncrowned pope of Geneva, Servetus wrote to Calvin as to an equal, and, as the correspondence and opposition developed, he was almost as unsparing as Calvin in the exchange of uncomplimentary epithets. Tired of a correspondence, which had developed into a controversy with an obscure individual, Calvin finally sent to Servetus a copy of his great "authoritative" INSTITUTIONES RELIGIONIS CHRISTIANÆ, as if Servetus had never seen this *ne plus ultra* monument of logical conclusions drawn from insane and cruel premises. Servetus, however, far from being overwhelmed by the condescension, returned the work to Calvin profusely annotated with marginal notes showing from Scripture and from the ante-Nicene Fathers the untenable character of Calvin's main propositions. This was an unpardonable offense. "There is hardly a page that is not defiled with his vomit," Calvin wrote to a friend in regard to the annotations. And when, in addition, Servetus sent

to him a copy of the first outlines of the projected CHRISTIANISMI RESTITUTIO, Calvin wrote thus to his chief lieutenant, Farel: "Servetus lately wrote to me and sent me with his letters a great volume of his ravings, saying that I would see there things stupendous and unheard of until now. He offers to come here if I approve, but I will not pledge my faith to him. For should he come, if my authority avails, I should never suffer him to go away alive."

As he did not yet have Servetus within the reach of his own hand, Calvin wrote to Cardinal Tournon denouncing the Spanish physician for heresy, but Servetus was again protected by the Archbishop of Vienne. The Spaniard, unconscious of the plot, serenely kept on with his daring theological studies, and in 1552 completed his second and last great work, the CHRISTIANISMI RESTITUTIO. This was a stout volume of 734 pages, and was secretly printed in Vienne, without the author's name, but the initials "M. S. V." (*Michael Servetus Villanovus*), at the end of the book, furnished a sufficient clue as to the authorship. The work consists of a series of separate treatises, paged continuously. First there are five books and two dialogues on the Divine Trinity, then two books on Faith and the Justice of Christ's Kingdom; these are followed by four books on Regeneration and the Kingdom of Antichrist, thirty Epistles to Calvin, sixty Signs of Antichrist, and finally an "Apologia" addressed to Philip Melanchthon. Of

the original edition of one thousand copies, only two copies are known to have escaped confiscation and destruction; one of these is preserved in the National Library at Paris, and the other in the Imperial Library at Vienna, where a reprint was published in 1790. Of this reprint there is a copy at Harvard.

Immediately upon publication a copy of this work was sent to Calvin, who at once recognized the hand of Servetus, and forthwith, through a go-between, denounced the author to the Catholic authorities in Vienne. On the pretext that his medical services were required by some sick prisoners, Servetus was induced to proceed to the prison hospital, where he was arrested and examined. On this occasion Dr. Villeneuve denied that he was identical with Michael Servetus, the author of the book De Trinitatis Erroribus, and this is the sole foundation for the charge that he was "a persistent liar." But what if he did play with the facts of his biography in front of treacherous, unjust and cruel inquisitors? Did *they* tell the truth in their charges against him, or could he expect any justice from them? Is a man "a persistent liar" if he tries to deceive a band of robbers and murderers? Calvin and his saintly followers would not, of course, under any circumstances have tried to save their lives, or even their country, by a misstatement of facts, but they did not mind deceiving the human race by the false doctrines of Predestination and Infant Damnation. Conscience, truly, is a variable quantity!

Having frankly acknowledged himself as the author of the letters to Calvin, which the latter kindly submitted to the Roman Catholic Inquisition, Servetus was imprisoned and condemned to death by slow fire, but by the assistance of friends managed to escape from Vienne on April 7th, 1553.

5. THE TRIAL AND DEATH OF SERVETUS.

Intending to take refuge in Italy, Servetus made his way to Geneva in July of his fatal year. Imagining himself safe in this free Republic where so many French Protestants had found refuge, he remained here for a month at an inn, and even appeared at public worship. His presence in the city thus became known to Calvin, who, being the political as well as ecclesiastical dictator, caused him to be arrested on August 13th. The arrest and the subsequent trial and execution were, of course, totally illegal, as Servetus was not, any more than Calvin, a subject of the Commonwealth, nor had committed any of his alleged offenses within the jurisdiction of the Genevan authorities. Nobody, in fact, except Calvin had ever read or even seen any of the books for which Servetus was condemned to death, or understood the first thing of the theological controversy involved. The Court that was sitting in judgment was composed of nothing but laymen, some of them the political enemies of the bilious tyrant, but the majority

were the subservient tools (sincere or terrorized) of the eloquent, imperious and saintly Reformer. To the ruling majority the testimony of Calvin alone was enough, and to Calvin the case of Servetus was a test as to the permanence of his rule over the disaffected political party in Geneva.

We will not dwell at length upon the details of the ensuing trial and execution, the story of which reads as if enacted in Hell rather than on the earth among Christians and reformers. Immediately upon his arrest Servetus was robbed of his money and personal property, (ninety-seven gold crowns, a gold chain, a number of rings and precious stones, clothing, etc.), and was thrust into the foulest dungeon of the common jail, a cell set aside for criminals of the lowest class, where for some time he was left to rot without being informed of the charges against him.

One might think that any ordinary Reformed Christian savage even in that "barbarous age" would have been moved to pity by the following appeal, written Sept. 15th, 1553:

> "My most honored Lords!—I humbly entreat of you to put an end to these great delays, or to exonerate me of the criminal charge. You must see that Calvin is at his wits' end and knows not what more to say, but for his pleasure would have me rot here in prison. The lice eat me up

alive; my breeches are in rags, and I have no change—no doublet, and but a single shirt in tatters. I have also demanded to have counsel assigned me. This would have been granted me in my native country; and here I am a stranger and ignorant of the laws and customs of the land. Yet you have given counsel to my accuser, whilst refusing it to me."

Some clothing was indeed sent to the unfortunate prisoner, weeks afterwards, but the appeal for legal assistance was rejected "as a piece of extraordinary impudence." (WILLIS, p. 370.)

The appeal is renewed in a letter of Oct. 10th, 1553:

"Most noble Lords,—It is now about three weeks since I petitioned for an audience, and still I have no reply. I entreat you for the love of Jesus Christ not to refuse me that which you would grant to a Turk, when I ask for justice at your hands. I have, indeed, things of importance to communicate to you, very necessary to be known.

"As to what you may have commanded to be done for me in the way of cleanliness, I have to inform you that nothing has been done, and that I am in a more filthy plight than ever. In addition, I suffer terribly from the cold and

> from colic, and from my rupture which causes me miseries of other kinds that I should feel shame in writing about more particularly. It is very cruel that I am neither allowed to speak, nor to have my most pressing wants supplied! for the love of God, Sirs, in pity or in duty, give orders in my behalf." (WILLIS, p. 455.)

When at length his accuser (through the person of Calvin's cook!) brought forward his charges, we find among these accusations such as the following: that he had remained unmarried, probably because he preferred an immoral life;—that he had read the Koran, and therefore was a secret Mohammedan;—that he had troubled the Churches in Germany by his first book [of which almost all the copies had been confiscated], and thus done eternal injury to a vast number of souls;—that [like Calvin] he had escaped from the Roman Catholic Inquisition;—that he had blasphemed against the Trinity in denying the plurality of divine persons, each of whom was a God;—that he had written in scurrilous and blasphemous terms *against Monsieur Jean Calvin;*—that he had taught that the soul of man is mortal; and that Jesus Christ had taken only the fourth part of His body from the Virgin Mary; etc., etc.

Many of these charges Servetus did not deem worthy of an answer, but the last two he designated as "horrible, execrable. Had I said anything of

the kind, I should myself think me worthy of death." (Willis, p. 451.)

During the personal hearings of the long and tedious trial, Servetus was threatened with torture on the rack, and escaped only at the earnest remonstrance of Vandel, one of the Genevan senators. Urged by the Catholic authorities of Vienne to return the prisoner to the death by slow fire from which he had escaped, the Court *mercifully* gave him the choice of being returned or remaining in their own Reformed hands. Servetus, relying, perhaps, on the influence of Calvin's political enemies, preferred the latter. Calvin himself frequently appeared in person against his victim whose calm, rational, and unfearing arguments he overwhelmed with personal compliments such as "scoundrel," "rascal," "villainous cur," "dog," "ass," "swine," etc. In written notes Servetus, indeed, returned the compliments by epithets such as "reprobate," "blasphemer," and "murderer," but at the hearings he generally preserved a calm attitude, and a manifest endeavor to shift the quarrel from the personal to the theological plane. What especially infuriated Calvin was the persistent demand of Servetus for *Scriptural proofs* against him, proofs that were never forthcoming.

Alluding to the many clerical signatures obtained by Calvin to his professed "Refutation," Servetus writes thus to the Court:

"Thus far we have had clamor enough, and a great crowd of subscribers! But what places in Scripture do they adduce as their authority for the Invisible Individual Son they acknowledge? They refer to none; nor, indeed, will they ever be able to point to any. Is this becoming in these great ministers of the Divine Word, who everywhere boast that they teach nothing that is not confirmed by distinct passages of Sacred Scripture? But no such places are now forthcoming; and my doctrine, consequently is impugned by mere clamor, without a shadow of reason, and without the citation of a single authority against it.

MICHAEL SERVETUS.

Here, indeed, alone, but having Christ as his most sure Protector." (WILLIS, p. 441.)

The result of the trial was a foregone conclusion. Writing to his friend, Sulzer, Calvin quotes with approval the pious desire of Bucer to have Servetus "disemboweled and torn to pieces"; and writing to Farel, his chief lieutenant, he says, "I hope the sentence will be capital *at the least,* but I would have the cruel manner of carrying it out, remitted" (WILLIS, p. 437),— as if he did not know that the law of Geneva *demanded* the burning of a heretic once convicted; and as if he did not know that his despotic will could override any law of the town!

In the face of deadly threats and browbeatings, Servetus would not make a single retraction or compromise, his one demand being to be confronted with the Word of the Only One, whom he recognized as his Judge. He himself had long foreseen and predicted his own martyrdom. Writing in 1547 to Abel Pepin, one of Calvin's intimate friends in Geneva, he states:

"Mihi ob eam rem moriendum esse certo scio; sed non propterea animo deficior, ut fiam discipulus similis præceptori." [7]

Again, in the CHRISTIANISMI RESTITUTIO he writes: "If now thou shouldst endure the cross and death for Christ, remember only that thou owest these things to Christ who suffered them for thee. Consider, again, that martyrdom is no death to thee, but life itself and the destruction of death. Death for Christ is not to be feared by thee, for thou owest it and it is precious in His sight; and this the more so as it is not death to thee, but the dissolution of Satan's prison, and the call to the liberty of glory, life itself always remaining living in Christ." [8] Thus prepared, he was able to face his persecutors without fear, absolutely refusing to recant or compromise. In a note to Calvin from the prison he writes: "I defy thee, murderer, and I shall prove it by my conduct. In a cause so just I am constant, and I have no fear of death." [9]

The trial drawing to a close, and the verdict being self-evident, Servetus asked for a last interview with Calvin. Instead of begging for mercy, or offering

[7] "That I am about to die for this cause I know for certain, but I do not lose courage on that account, in order that I may become a disciple similar to his Master." The original of this and other letters by Servetus is published in the HISTORIA MICHAELIS SERVETI by H. A. Allwoerden. Helmstad 1727. A copy of this rare work is preserved by the Academy of the New Church, Bryn Athyn, Pa.

[8] R. 545.

[9] Allwoerden, p. 96.

some kind of retraction, Servetus simply asked Calvin to pardon him for inconsiderate personal treatment. The latter loftily assured him that the quarrel was not personal but theological, and immediately began to excuse his course by referring to the welfare of the Church. *"Qui s'excuse, s'accuse"!*

The final sentence was pronounced upon him an hour before noon of October 27th. Among the offenses recapitulated in the charge we find items such as these: "having perfidiously broken and escaped from the prison of Vienne, where he had been confined [by the Roman Catholic Inquisition!] because of the wicked and abominable opinions confessed in his book;" . . . "Continuing obstinate in his opinions, not only against the true Christian religion, but as an arrogant innovator and inventor of heresies against Popery [!], which led to his being burned in effigy at Vienne, along with five bales of his book." For these and similar offenses Servetus was condemned "to be bound and taken to Champel, and there, being fastened to a stake, to be burned alive."

The sentence having been read, and the staff broken over the prisoner, a terrible silence ensued, which was finally broken by Servetus entreating for a less cruel manner of death, "lest, through excess of suffering I might prove faithless to myself, and belie the convictions of my life." The appeal meeting with no response, the prisoner went on to say that

"he had done nothing to deserve death; he prayed God, nevertheless, to forgive his enemies and persecutors," and he ended his appeal by the prayer: "O God, save my soul! O Jesu, Son of the eternal God, have mercy upon me."

A solemn procession was now formed, winding its way through the narrow crowded streets to the place of execution. Eye-witnesses relate that Calvin, seated by a window, smiled as his victim passed by.[10] Farel, who had been appointed to offer the last consolations to the prisoner, walked by his side and unceasingly tried to make him admit the errors of his theological ways. But in vain; he had no answer other than broken ejaculations and invocations on the name of God. "Is there no word in your mouth but the name of God?" asked Farel indignantly. "On whom can I now call but on God?" was the answer. Questions as to wife or child, if he had either, elicited no reply. "We exhorted," wrote Farel afterwards, "we entreated, but made no impression. He beat his breast, asked pardon for his faults, invoked God, confessed his Savior, and much besides, but would not acknowledge the Son of God, *save in the man Jesus.*"

"When he came in sight of the fatal pile, the wretched Servetus prostrated himself on the ground,

[10] *Sunt qui affirmant Calvinum cum vidisset ad supplicium duci Servetum subrisse, vultu sub sinu vestis leviter dejecto.* (ALLWOERDEN, p. 160).

and for a while was absorbed in prayer. Rising and advancing a few steps, he found himself in the hand of the executioner, by whom he was made to sit on a block, his feet just reaching the ground. His body was then bound to the stake behind him by several turns of an iron chain, whilst his neck was secured in like manner by the coils of a hempen rope. His two books,—the one in manuscript sent to Calvin in confidence six or eight years before for his strictures, and a copy of the one lately printed in Vienne,—were then fastened to his waist, and his head was encircled in mockery with a chaplet of straw and green twigs bestrewed with brimstone. The deadly torch was then applied to the faggots and flashed in his face; and the brimstone catching, and the flames rising, wrung from the victim such a cry of anguish as struck terror into the surrounding crowd. After this he was bravely silent; but the wood *being purposely green,* although the people aided the executioner in heaping the faggots upon him, a long half-hour elapsed before he ceased to show signs of life and suffering. Immediately before giving up the ghost, with a last expiring effort he cried aloud: 'Jesu, Thou Son of the Eternal God, have compassion upon me!' All was then hushed save the hissing and crackling of the green wood; and by-and-by there remained no more of what had been Michael Servetus but a charred and blackened trunk and a handful of ashes. So died, in advance

of his age, one of the gifted sons of God, the victim of religious fanaticism and personal hate." (WILLIS, p. 487.)

6. THE AFTERMATH.

Not even the death of his victim could satisfy Calvin's hatred. Before long, a wave of reaction set in among the citizens of Geneva, many of whom were profoundly impressed not only with the fortitude and constancy shown by Servetus, but also with Calvin's bloodthirstiness and shiftiness. It was well known that Calvin in earlier years had emphatically denounced the "right of the Sword" in dealing with heresy. In the earlier editions of his INSTITUTIONS he had said, for instance, speaking of heretics: "Drowning, beheading, and burning, are far from being the proper means of bringing them and their like to proper views" (Book I, Chap. 2; WILLIS, pp. 301, 512).

Before the year was over Calvin found himself forced to explain, excuse, and defend himself, and early in 1554 he published in Latin and French his DEFENSE OF THE ORTHODOX FAITH RESPECTING THE HOLY TRINITY AGAINST THE ERRORS OF MICHAEL SERVETUS, a work which was far less a defense of the Trinity than a defense of his own course and a renewed attack upon his dead adversary. "It can hardly soften our judgment of Calvin," says Prof. Emerton, "that in this attack upon an enemy now

beyond the reach of his assault, he should have chosen to employ the foulest and most insulting language in his choice vocabulary of abuse" (*e.g.*, "when Servetus and his like presume to meddle with the mysteries of religion, it is as if a swine came thrusting his snout into a treasury of sacred things." —WILLIS, p. 500).

A letter written by Calvin to his special friend and supporter, Bullinger, of Zurich, dated Nov. 3rd, 1554, plainly exhibits an uneasy conscience, or, more likely, a fear of consequences and a desire to shift responsibility. "Others may construe me more harshly; say that I am a master in severity and cruelty, and that with my pen I lacerate the body of the man who came to his death through me. Some, too, there are,—not otherwise evilly disposed,— who say that the world is silent as to what was done, and that no attempt is made to refute my arguments on the punishment of heresy, *through fear of my displeasure.* But it is well that I have you for the associate of my fault, if, indeed, there be any fault; *for you were my authority and instigator.* Look to it, therefore, that you gird yourself for the fight." (WILLIS, p. 509.)

Evil, however, contains its own punishment, and the mills of God, though slowly, grind exceeding fine. The hatred of Calvin against Servetus was theological and spiritual; it was the *doctrines* of Servetus that he hated, rather than the person,—

the doctrine of the supreme and sole Divinity of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the freedom of man in spiritual things, the doctrine of charity and good works. The author of the doctrine of Predestination and Infant Damnation carried with him this confirmed hatred into the spiritual world; it had become the ruling love of his life and the shaper of his destiny.

As to Calvin's ultimate fate in the life after death, Swedenborg gives the following account in the TRUE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, no. 798:

"In respect to CALVIN I have heard as follows: 1. When he first entered the spiritual world he fully believed that he was still in the world where he had been born. The angels who in the beginning associated with him, told him that he was now in their world, and not in his former world, but he said, 'I have the same body, the same hands, and the same senses.'

"The angels then told him that he was now in a substantial body, and that formerly he had been not only in that same body but also in a material body which invested the substantial one; and that the material body had been cast off, while the substantial body, from which a man is a man, still remained.

"This he at first understood, but the next day he returned to his former belief that he was still in the world where he had been born. This was because he was a sensual man and had no other belief than

what he could draw from the objects of the bodily senses; and from this it came about that he drew all the dogmas of his faith as conclusions from his self-intelligence and not from the Word. His having quoted the Word was in order to win the assent of the common people.

"II. After this first period, having left the angels, he wandered about inquiring for those who from ancient times had believed in Predestination. He was told that these had been removed from that place and had been shut up and covered over, and that there was no way open to them except rearward beneath the earth. The disciples of Godeschalcus,[11] however, still went about freely and sometimes assembled in a place which was called *Pyris,* in the spiritual language. As Calvin earnestly desired their company, he was led to an assembly where some of them were standing, and when he came among them he was in his heart's delight and bound himself to them by an interior friendship.

"III. But when the followers of Godeschalcus had been led away to their brethren in the cavern, Calvin became weary and therefore sought for an asylum in various places. Finally he was received into a certain society made up wholly of simple-minded people, some of whom were also religious. And when he saw that they neither knew nor could

[11] A vagabond monk, (806–867) who preached an extreme doctrine of Predestination.

understand anything about Predestination, he betook himself to one corner of the society, and there he hid himself for a long time, not opening his mouth on any ecclesiastical matter. This was provided in order that he might withdraw from his error respecting Predestination, and in order that the ranks of those who, after the Synod of Dort, adhered to that detestable heresy, might be filled up. All of these were gradually sent away to their fellows in the cavern.

"IV. At length, when the modern Predestinarians inquired where Calvin was, he was found, after a search for him, on the confines of a society composed entirely of simple-minded folks. He was therefore called away from there and was brought to a governor who was filled with similar dregs. The latter now took him into his house and guarded him, and this lasted until the New Heaven began to be established by the Lord. Then, when the governor who guarded him was ejected together with his crew, Calvin betook himself to a meretricious house, and remained there for some time.

"V. As he then enjoyed the liberty of wandering about, and also was allowed to come near the place where I was sojourning, I was permitted to converse with him, at first concerning the New Heaven which at this day is being formed out of those who acknowledge the Lord alone as the God of heaven and earth, according to His own words in Matthew 28: 18. I

told him that such believe that 'He and the Father are one' (John 10:30), and that 'He is in the Father and the Father in Him,' and that 'whosoever seeth and knoweth Him, seeth and knoweth the Father' (John 14:6–11), and that thus there is one God in the Church as there is in Heaven.

"VI. After I had said these things he was silent at first, as was his habit, but after half an hour he broke the silence and asked: 'Was not Christ a man, the son of Mary who was betrothed to Joseph? How can a man be adored as God?'

"I answered, 'Is not Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior, both God and Man?'

"He replied, 'He is both God and Man; nevertheless, the Divinity is not His, but the Father's.'

"I asked again, 'Where, then, is Christ?'

"He answered, 'In the lowest parts of heaven,' and he gave as proof of this the humiliation of Christ before the Father, and that He allowed Himself to be crucified. To this Calvin added some jocular remarks about the worshipping of Christ, which then broke forth into the memory which he carried with him from the world, which were, in brief, that the worship of Christ was nothing but idolatry. He wanted to add, further, things unfit to be spoken concerning that worship, but the angels who were with me shut his lips.

"VII. Then I, from a zeal to convert him, said that the Lord our Savior is not only both God and

Man, but that in Him, moreover, God is Man and Man is God. And this I confirmed by the teaching of Paul that 'in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily' (1 Col. 2:9), and by the statement of John that 'He is the true God and life eternal' (1 Epist. 5:20), as also by the words of the Lord Himself that 'it is the Father's will that all who believe on the Son shall have eternal life, and that he who believes not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him' (John 3:36; 6:40), and finally by the declaration of faith called Athanasian, which declares that in Christ, God and Man are not two but one, and are in one Person, like the soul and body in man.

"VIII. Having heard these things Calvin answered, 'What are all these things that you have brought forward from the Word, but empty sounds? Is not the Word the book of all heresies, and thus like the weathercocks on house-tops and ships' marts, which turn every way according to the wind? It is Predestination alone that determines all things pertaining to religion. This is the habitation or tabernacle in which all things of religion meet together, and the shrine and sanctuary there is faith, through which justification and salvation is effected. Has any man freedom of choice in spiritual things? Is not everything of salvation a free gift? Any arguments, therefore, against these principles, and thus against Predestination, I hear and perceive no

otherwise than as belchings from the stomach, or as rumblings of the bowels. Because this is so, I have thought to myself that any church where anything else is taught,—even though it be from the Word,—and any congregation there assembled, is like a pen of beasts containing both sheep and wolves, but with the wolves muzzled by the laws of civil justice lest they break forth upon the sheep (those predestined being meant by the sheep), and that the preaching and praying there are like so much hiccoughing. But I will give you my confession of faith; it is this: There is a God, and He is omnipotent. And there is no salvation for any one except those who are elected and predestined by God the Father, and everybody else is condemned to his lot, that is, his fate.'

"IX. Upon hearing these things I exclaimed in indignation, 'What you say is heinous. Begone, wicked spirit! Do you not know that you are in the spiritual world, and that there is a heaven and a hell, and that Predestination involves that some have been written down for heaven and some for hell? How, then, can you form for yourself any other idea of God than as being a tyrant who admits his favorites into his city, and sends the rest to the rack? Shame on you!'

"X. I then read to him what is written in the book of dogmas of the Evangelicals, entitled FORMULA CONCORDIÆ, in regard to the erroneous doctrine of the Calvinists, concerning the worship of the Lord

and concerning Predestination. Their doctrine of the worship of the Lord is thus defined:

'It is damnable idolatry, if the confidence and faith of the heart are placed in Christ, not only according to His Divine, but also according to His human nature, and the honor of worship is directed to both.'

"And Predestination is thus defined:

'Christ did not die for all men but only for the elect. God has created the greater part of men for eternal damnation, and does not wish that the greater part should be converted and live. Those who are elect and born again cannot lose the faith and the Holy Spirit, even though they should commit all kinds of great sins and crimes. But those who are not elect are necessarily damned, nor can they attain to salvation even if they were to be baptized a thousand times, or if they were to partake of the Sacrament every day, and besides lead as holy and blameless a life as it is ever possible to live. (Leipzig edition of 1756, pp. 837, 838.)

"Having read this, I asked him whether the things written in that book were from his own doctrine or not. He replied that they were, but that he did not remember whether those very words had flowed from his pen, although they might have come from his lips.

"XI. When the servants of the Lord had heard these things, they all withdrew from him, whereupon he hastily betook himself to a road leading to a cavern where those are who have confirmed themselves in the execrable dogma of Predestination. I afterwards spoke with some of those imprisoned in

Joannes Calvinus

that cavern, and asked about their lot. They said they were forced to labor for their food, that they were all enemies of one another, that every one sought for an occasion to do evil to the other, and that they also did this whenever they found the slightest opportunity, and that this was the delight of their lives."

PART II.

THE THEOLOGY OF MICHAEL SERVETUS.

1. SERVETUS AS A NATURAL PHILOSOPHER.

We may now turn to the main subject of the present treatise, the theological system of Michael Servetus, and its wonderful approximation to the Doctrines revealed by the Lord through Emanuel Swedenborg. Like the latter, Servetus was not only a scientific theologian, but also a theological scientist,—a natural philosopher whose eyes were open to the operation of spiritual law in natural things. "To Servetus," observes Tollin, "there was nothing Divine without an elementary basis, and nothing mundane without a Divine content. Nature to him became translucent with the Spirit of God, while God to him became concrete. To Servetus all nature serves for illustration of Theology, and all Theology serves for the fulfilment of nature. The metaphysical world he looks upon in a physical manner, and, vice versa, the whole physical world he conceives of in a mystic-symbolic manner." [1]

Had Servetus been satisfied to remain in the service of merely natural Science, he would no doubt be

[1] Lehrsystem, vol. 2 p. 177.

reckoned now as one of the greatest lights of learning of the sixteenth century. We can advance this claim without fear of contradiction, as it is now universally acknowledged that this Spanish physician was actually the first discoverer of the circulation of the blood through the lungs,—a whole century before Harvey more fully explained this process. And this momentous discovery Servetus announces very quietly, almost casually, in his last book, as an illustration of his doctrine concerning the origin and composition of the human soul. The announcement is introduced by a description of the three degrees of the blood, or the three bloods or spirits, within the body of man, "*derived from the substance of the three superior elements.*" The first is *a natural spirit,* primarily associated with the red blood and communicated from the arteries to the veins by their "anastomoses"; the second is the *vital spirit,* whose seat is in the heart itself; and the third is the *animal spirit,* which is like a ray of light and has its home in the brain and the nerves. He then proceeds to show how the blood is sent from the right to the left ventricle of the heart, not, as was commonly supposed, by passing through the middle wall of the heart, but by passing first through the pulmonary artery into the lungs, and thence through the pulmonary vein into the left ventricle of the heart. He announced this process as "a Divine philosophy" (*divinam philosophiam adjungam*), because he re-

garded the blood in its three degrees as the soul itself continually arising from the combination of the Spirit of God in the atmospheres with the materials taken in by the human body.[2]

In his Christo-centric Theology Servetus "finds all the treasures even of natural science hidden in Christ," [3] and also, conversely, he finds Christ hidden in all things of nature. Everything in the created universe was to him a symbolic representation of the eternal Word through which all things had been created, and this Word was the soul of Christ.

2. THE SPIRITUAL SENSE OF SCRIPTURE.

From this spiritual view-point of Nature, Servetus looked upon the written Word, the Sacred Scripture, as conveying throughout the same message concerning the Christ who was, and who is, and who is to come. The whole Bible, he maintains, in its interior or spiritual sense treats of Jesus Christ and of Him alone.

This conception, however, by no means dissolved his faith in the literal sense; nay, it established the Law and the Prophets upon a new and surer foundation. "It is highly significant," says Prof. Emerton, "that from the start he was impressed with what we should now call the historical view of theology.

[2] R. 168–181. ALLWOERDEN p. 231. [3] R. 251.

As he read the Old Testament, its writers seemed to him to be referring to things that their hearers would understand. . . . This one point is fairly clear: that Servetus grasped, as no one up to his time had grasped, this one central notion that, whatever the Divine plan may have been, it must be revealed by the long, slow movement of history." Servetus, therefore, based his Theology upon the solid bedrock of *facts,*—upon the literal truth of the Scriptures when interpreted in the light of contemporary history, and the chief and central fact of all biblical history he believed to be—CHRIST, the incarnate Word.

His conception of the twofold sense of Scripture is set forth at length in the preface to his edition of Pagnini's Latin Bible. He illustrates his doctrine by the peculiar nature of the Hebrew language, "which is full of hyperboles, emphases, concurrences, antitheses, allusions, and other things of the kind. . . . For the single prophets according to their letter followed History, which prefigured the future in which the mysteries of Christ are fulfilled according to the spirit; for, as Paul says, all things referred in a figure to these; and, as John says, 'the testimony of Jesus Christ is the *spirit* of prophecy!' . . . The whole Hebrew tongue is full of hyperboles, containing within themselves other and greater mysteries. The literal sense, therefore, is an overshadowing (*obumbratio*) of the future verity, as, for

instance, under the shadow of David there shines back the verity referring to Christ alone. For the historicals of David in the Psalms are the occasions for predicting concerning Christ, nay, for this reason David is called the type of Christ. Thus it is said of the Israelitish people in a shadow, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son,' when yet this truly refers to Christ alone; so that we say that the literal sense is prophetical of Christ. Add to this that this book is said to be written *within and without,* and the Scripture manifestly has a twofold face, like a sword sharpened on both sides." [4]

He further says that "in the person of Christ are fulfilled all the figures of the Law and all the mysteries of the ceremonies, concerning which we shall speak in a book on Circumcision;" [5] and he also promised to write a book "On the True Understanding of the Scriptures." This, as far as we know, was never composed, and we cannot tell how far he entered into the particulars of the internal sense. As in the case of Origen, so with Servetus, his idea of the spiritual sense was only a general perception; it could not be otherwise without a direct new Divine Revelation such as was given through Swedenborg. In various passages Servetus expresses his anticipation of such a new Revelation, and prays for the day when "Thy book, now closed by so many seals, shall be opened to all."

[4] ALLWOERDEN p. 189, 190; R. 673.

[5] ALLWOERDEN p. 237.

At the trial in Geneva Calvin brought up his victim's method of historical and spiritual interpretation as an evidence of the "insane lust of Servetus to destroy faith." Servetus then "developed at length his well known distinction between the literal or historical sense, and the spiritual or mystical. According to the first, all the prophecies referred to contemporary historical persons, whereas in the latter and higher sense everything had reference to Christ, as indeed, had been shown by the earlier Church Fathers." [6]

While Servetus lacked the term "correspondences" to give a universally comprehensive expression to his ideas of allegories, types, figures, shadows, and images, still he seems to have grasped the essential idea of the relation of heavenly things to earthly things. "From eternity," he says, "the images or representations of all things are in God, refulgent in the Divine Wisdom itself, in the Word of God, as in an architype." [7] And since this Divine Wisdom or Logos by which all things were created, is the soul of Christ, it follows that all good things of the created universe, no less than all things of the written Word, are images and types of the Christ who made them, while all evil things are the images and types of Antichrist.

In a sublime passage he refers to Peter Lombard,[8] who "said that almost every syllable of the New

[6] TRECHSEL, p. 229, 230.
[7] R. 137.
[8] A famous scholastic theologian, 1090–1164.

Testament internally points to the immanent Trinity, but to me not only the syllables but all the letters of the Bible, and the mouth of the sucklings, nay, the very stones, cry out towards me 'There is One God and there is One Lord, Jesus, the Christ!'"[9] And he compares the whole Law of the Old Testament to a pregnant woman who is about to give birth to the Divine Son.[10] Not only the Old Testament, however, but also the New, possesses this internal or spiritual sense, for all the acts of Christ while He was in the world have an inner secret sense beside the external symbol.[11]

Like Origen, Servetus was unable to explain the internal sense in detail, and he generally contents himself with pointing out only their application to the Lord Himself. His interpretations, of course, are mere hints or suggestions of the Divine unfolding which was to be given later through Swedenborg, but nonetheless he often comes remarkably close to the real internal meaning. Thus he shows that "everything in the Jewish Church took place by means of representatives, not for the sake of the Jews, who did not understand these things, but for the sake of us, the followers of Christ."[12] His discriminations are often quite remarkable. "Circumcision," he says, "was not a type of Baptism, as has been supposed, but it was a type of that spiritual circumcision which takes place in regeneration.

[9] E. 27 *b*. [10] R. 259. [11] E. 20 *b*. [12] R. 482.

Otherwise one corporeal act would be the type of another corporeal act." [13] The Apocalypse interested him deeply, and his occasional attempts at interpretation are always suggestive. Thus the three unclean spirits like frogs, proceeding out of the mouth of the Dragon and the beast and the false prophet (Rev. 16:13), signified the false doctrine of three persons in the Godhead, and he follows up this analogy with scientific precision and proofs drawn from Zoölogy.[14]

Apologizing for having called the letter of the Word "a shadow," he states that "it is from necessity I have been forced to use this expression, because I could find no other term by which to signify this Divine mystery. Nor would I suggest that the Word is a shadow that is past and remains no more." "Rather, the substance of the body of Christ is at the present day the same which formerly was the substance of the Word." "Moreover, with Paul I have for good reasons called the Law, and everything that was under the Law—and thus also the Word under the Law, and the Spirit, and Jehovah Himself,—*a shadow* of the things to come." (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5, 10:1.) "For in all the things that were under the Law, Christ was shadowed forth and represented. They are the sacred hulls and types of the good things to come. And therefore I have been willing to call everything in the Law a shadow, in order to show that the body itself, *i.e., the Truth*

[13] R. 415. [14] R. 463.

itself, was to be found in Christ." [15] "For in every shadow there is at the same time a certain image. And thus in the shadow of the Old Testament Dispensation there is contained the shadow-image of Christ. Nor is the shadow any absolute darkness but only a diminished Light." [16] "God Himself is the Light, the eternal Sun. Now in a certain manner the ideal God-like Man, Christ, in proceeding from God to come to the earth, comes between the Sun and the earth. And in thus coming He casts His shadow before Him, and this, the shadow reflecting the figure of Christ on the earth, is what is seen in the types of the Old Testament. God Himself is as it were concealed behind the body of the coming Christ, and is invisible to the earth until Christ, the Light from Light, appears upon the earth. Then, indeed, the darkening of the Sun is past, and there is again a free view of the Sun. But the shadows themselves always referred back to the Light, for shadows can be cast only when there is light behind the body. And thus also the obscure Oracle of the Word refers back to God: but God Himself can be seen only in the Incarnate Word, in the full radiance of His Glory,—Christ." [17]

One final quotation: "The whole secret of the Word was the glorification of the Man, Christ" (*Totum Verbi arcanum erat hujus Hominis glorificatio.*) [18]

[15] E. 2 *b*, 5 *a*, 9 *a*.
[16] R. 202.
[17] Dial. I. 2 *b*.
[18] R. 579.

3. THE SPIRITUAL WORLD.

With a perception, such as Servetus enjoyed, of the spiritual in nature and of the spiritual in the Word of God, it is not surprising to find that he enjoyed also an unusual illumination in regard to the laws and the life of the spiritual world. Though his teachings on this subject bear an astonishing resemblance to some of the things revealed by Swedenborg, it must be remembered that he did not lay claim to any new or immediate revelation, but simply drew his conclusions from the statements in the Old and New Testaments. Some of his statements, indeed, are obscure and even fallacious, but it is not our purpose to dwell on these in the present brief treatise, but to bring out those things which are in most striking harmony with the Doctrine of the New Jerusalem.

In respect to *the spiritual nature of man,* Servetus sharply differentiates between the Spirit, the Soul, and the Body. By the SPIRIT he means the inmost vessel receptive of life, that which Swedenborg terms the Soul or the "human internal." Servetus also calls it "the internal man," and understands it to be the supreme presence and dwelling place of the Spirit of God,—in itself Divine and incorruptible.

The SOUL, on the other hand, with Servetus is that which Swedenborg terms the Spirit or the inter-

mediate Mind. This, Servetus says, is an organic spiritual body, composed of substances from the higher elements or atmospheres, consisting of actual and divisible particles, separated from each other by interstices, and therefore interpenetrable by forces and substances acting from within and from without. In the beginning this spiritual body was interpenetrated only by the Spirit of God, but since the fall of man it is interpenetrated also by Satanic inspirations. It is not a purely spiritual substance, however, for after death it carries with it something essential from the substance of the material body (*ab ipsa corporis substantia essentialiter aliquid accipiunt*).[19] Students of Swedenborg will recognize here something resembling the doctrine of the "limbus."

Servetus refers approvingly to the ancients as teaching that "angels and souls are spiritual bodies, consisting of the finest substances of nature, which appear almost incorporeal, but possess also corruptible nature."[20] The spiritual bodies of all men, having become corrupted, would inevitably have perished, had not Christ by His Redemption infused new life into them and rendered them immortal.[21] So substantial is this spiritual body of man that Servetus frequently speaks of the instruments, the vessels, the arteries of the soul. It is built up out of the purer blood, and is etherial and full of light.

[19] R. 228. [20] R. 223. [21] R. 551.

After death, this human substantial body arises in a *human substantial form,* in the same human shape which it had possessed on earth. For not only the angels, but also human souls, possess the human shape because created in the image of Christ, the Divine Man, their eternal prototype.[22] Immediately after the resurrection comes PURGATORY, which Servetus calls a baptismal fire by which everything impure is burned out of the soul. This fire, therefore, is not so much for the sake of punishment for past sins, as rather for the sake of a final purification.[23] "As Christ receives the souls of his faithful after their departure, so also He purifies them both in this life and in the other, through this reception, and the fire of His Spirit consumes the dross by its flame." [24]

While believing thus in a state of vastation, preparatory to the entrance of the faithful into heaven, Servetus utterly rejects the Roman doctrine of intercession by masses, prayers, etc., for the dead. "Everybody must carry his own debts, and pay unto the uttermost farthing. As the tree falleth, so it lieth." [25]

The separation of the blessed from the damned takes place at death. Those who depart without having been reborn through Christ remain in hell forever. But of those who are to be saved, some are purified in this world, and others more in the world

[22] R. 276. [23] R. 723–724. [24] R. 724. [25] R. 540.

to come. But the fire by which they are purged is by no means the tormenting fire of hell, but a wholesome fiery consummation. And these good spirits, he says, "do not rejoice if we pray for them, but they do rejoice if we amend our lives." [26]

In respect to HEAVEN, Servetus teaches that "wherever Christ is there He forms Heaven round about Himself." [27] Since the time of the Ascension, Christ indeed dwells especially in the third heaven where He is the all in all and fills all and everything with His presence, but nevertheless He is not confined to any special place in Heaven, for He is above all space, even as He is above all time. He dwells therefore in every part of Heaven, and at the same time is also with us on earth.[28] But in Heaven "His presence will be so sensibly felt that we shall be able to perceive Him with all our senses, —we shall see Him, hear Him, touch Him, smell Him, and taste Him." [29]

From the letter of Scripture it is evident to Servetus that there are three heavens: "In the beginning God created Heaven and earth." Heaven, here, in the Hebrew, is *Shamayim,* literally "the *two* heavens." But above these two, says Servetus, there is a third heaven, a heaven of Divinity, which is also called the heaven of heavens, and it was into this heaven that Paul tells us he was caught up. This heaven of light and fire is the radiance of the Word

[26] R. 718, 725. [27] E. 17 *b.* [28] R. 280, 620. [29] R. 718.

(*Verbi fulgor*), the true universal exemplar.[30] And in a beautiful passage he states, "through Christ even we have become Heaven, for when Christ makes us new creatures, He makes new heavens."[31]

In Heaven, moreover, as also in Hell, there are many different conditions. Servetus reproaches his adversaries for teaching that all the just enjoy the same degree of blessedness, and all the lost the same degree of damnation, while he, on the other hand, could not believe that those who have betrayed Christ would receive no worse punishment than a poor heathen who had not known the Lord. And therefore he held firmly to the conviction that in the world above there are many mansions and many different degrees of light and bliss, even as in the infernal regions there are various degrees of darkness and abysses beneath abysses. But we must always understand that Heaven, as well as Hell, has its beginning in the human heart.[32]

In the Preface to his Restitution of Christianity he states that "the Kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of faith, a kingdom of the Gospel, and a kingdom of love. Without faith there is no *entrance* into the kingdom of Christ, and therefore the first book of the work treats of faith.[33] But faith is appreciated according to the gifts of Christ as given in the Gospel, and therefore the second book treats of the Gospel.[34] And, finally, the Kingdom of

[30] R. 157. [31] R. 312. [32] R. 338. [33] R. 288. [34] R. 314.

Heaven is no mere festivity, no lazy dreaming of eternal rest, but it is a kingdom of work and of conduct. And the conduct or walk through the heavenly kingdom, from step to step and from plane to plane, is nothing but love. Where love is thus in its own right atmosphere, there mere faith vanishes, for love is Divine. And therefore the third book treats of love." [35]

The above is but a meager outline of his teachings concerning the spiritual world. We cannot enter at present into further details, but enough has been given to indicate how nearly Heaven was about to unfold its secrets to this simple, earnest and perceptive student of the Word of God. Nevertheless, when compared to the Revelation given in Swedenborg's Writings, the things of the other life that were seen by Servetus, were but seen " as through a glass, darkly."

4. FAITH AND CHARITY.

Almost in the very words of Swedenborg, Servetus condemns the reformers for their fundamental heresy, the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Faith, he admits, does indeed save a man, but not faith alone, especially not the faith of the Lutherans, or of any Church that has divided the Godhead into three persons and Christ into two natures. " To

[35] R. 337.

believe," he says, "is supposed to be sufficient for salvation; but what folly to believe aught which cannot be understood,—which is impossible in the nature of things, and which may even be looked upon as blasphemous. Can it be that mere confusion of the mind is deemed an adequate condition of faith?" [36]

Faith is no mere gift of God, but is the same as *Confidence* based upon knowledge and experience.[37] No one can have faith in that of which he has no knowledge whatsoever.[38] Faith enters by means of knowledge of the truth, and is in itself the *door* through which *charity* may enter in, imparting the spirit which leads the way to good works and kindles the love. He unsparingly denounces and ridicules the Lutherans and the other reformers for their doctrine of salvation by faith alone,[39] and for their contempt of good works, and he openly laughs at their doctrine that good works are the necessary *fruits* of faith, for their faith necessarily invites man to do no works whatever.[40] "You must have charity," they say, "but it will be of no use to you. Their imaginations make men so lazy that they neglect everything and care nothing for prayers and almsgiving. If you speak to them of continence, chastity, temperance, or the mortification of the flesh, they mock at you with contemptuous laughter." [41] The

[36] R. 288. [38] R. 300. [40] R. 346.
[37] R. 297. [39] E. 99 *a*. [41] E. 99 *b*.

doctrine that good works are the fruits of faith he terms a "magical fascination of the devil." "Faith and Charity are brother and sister. The Scripture teaches that good works are the fruits of the *Spirit,* just as faith is the fruit of the Spirit, and charity is the fruit of the Spirit, according to GAL. 5: 22." [42]

"To love Christ," he exclaims, "is better than to believe." "Charity is the *greatest* of all the virtues. Charity and faith are inseparable companions. The judgment upon each one after death is according to his works. Good works have their own use and reward, and even Jews and heathens have been saved by charity and good works, and will receive the true faith at the day of Judgment." [43] "Charity is our perfection unto Christ. Charity makes us more similar to God, because God is charity itself." "Faith is to charity what Baptism is to the Holy Supper." [44] "Those have altogether misunderstood the apostle Paul, who at this day are blaming all good works, when yet Paul himself teaches that not only the justification of the Law, but also the justification of nature is a justification of work." [45] "Charity brings efficacy to faith itself." [46] "The Holy Spirit, which is charity, is the life of faith itself." [47] All the books of Servetus are teeming with teachings such as these.

[42] R. 608. [44] R. 341. [46] R. 350.
[43] R. 312. [45] R. 332. [47] R. 351.

5. SIN, FREEDOM, AND THE SACRAMENTS.

Servetus, as might be expected, was a firm believer in the freedom of the human will, and was an equally firm opponent of the doctrine of Predestination. God, he says, is freedom itself, since He is infinitely superior to all external compelling influences. And as God is freedom itself, so He grants to man to will freely and to act freely, within certain limits.[48] "The highest freedom, however, lies in obedience, and in it at the same time resides the loveliest reward of freedom."[49] Predestination he cries out against as the most horrible travesty of Divine justice. With wonderful keenness of vision he strikes at the very root of this execrable heresy by showing that predestination rests upon the fallacy that God is affected by the considerations of *time,* as if God would deliberately plan that one soul would be saved and another damned at some future time, when nevertheless God is above all time, and all things are *present* with Him.[50]

On the other hand, Servetus did not, like Pelagius, deny the fallen and corrupt nature of man. "At the fall," he says, "the serpent or Satan entered *substantially* into human nature,"[51] but this affected only his *hereditary* disposition. "Hereditary evil brings no actual *guilt,* for it is evil and disease rather than sin." Hence he threw overboard the horrible

[48] R. 54. [49] R. 383. [50] R. 285. [51] Epis. 23 p.638.

doctrine of infant damnation, for no person is responsible for the sins which he himself has not committed, and "no child or youth can ever be cast into hell before he has reached the age of responsibility—that is, before his twentieth year, according to Numbers 14: 29." [52] "Between the Good Shepherd and the little children whom he pressed to His heart, nothing is permitted to act as a separation. The Savior will tolerate nothing to come between,—no intermediary is needed, no good works are necessary, no guilt, no debt, no accuser,—not even baptism as a means of grace. The blessing which Christ gave to the little ones will transform them into glory as soon as they arise, awakened by Christ." [53] We wish we had space for the whole of his tender and beautiful chapter on the relation of the Savior to the little ones. It is among the most lovely things that have ever been written, and reveals the fighting Michael,—the Daniel come to judgment,—in the unsuspected character of a spiritual poet, or, rather, an angel of celestial tenderness.[54]

With a rare power of discrimination, he dared to differentiate between *evil* and *sin*. The idea of sin he confines to wicked actions alone, deliberately committed against a better conscience by a man who has freely fallen by his own voluntary choice.[55] This, most especially, brought upon him the hatred of the reformers, who one and all confounded hereditary

[52] R. 363. [53] R. 368. [54] Tollin 3: 4. [55] R. 593.

evil with actual guilt, thus making the burden of sin so enormous, so overwhelming, that no effort of man, no endeavor to shun particular evils, would be of any avail for salvation; nothing but the Grace of God, received through faith alone, could sweep away all evil and all sin, at one instantaneous stroke,—with those elected favorites who were destined to receive the gift of faith! A doctrine such as this, Servetus brands as *"perhorrenda."*

Having rejected the insane dogma of infant damnation, Servetus unfortunately fell into the error of rejecting the practice of infant baptism. Since no infant, baptized or otherwise, could be damned, baptism could not be a *sine qua non* for infant salvation. Baptism, to him, was an act of faith, an act of mature and rational judgment and choice, such as a child could not exercise; and therefore Servetus would defer Baptism until the thirtieth year, when, following in the footsteps of the Savior, the man would be in full exercise of rational judgment.[56] This doctrine is the only one that we have been able to discover among the teachings of Servetus which is contrary to the Doctrine of the New Jerusalem, but he must be pardoned for this error as he could not possibly know that Baptism, by the Word of God, by the laying on of hands, and by the surrounding sphere of the Church, effects an actual association in the spiritual world, independent of the volition

[56] R. 573–576.

of the one who is being baptized. This fact could be known only by an actual new Divine Revelation. Baptism, indeed, is not an essential of salvation, but it is the gate of entrance into the Lord's Church on earth, the Church into which the Lord invites especially the little children to "come unto Me."

Otherwise his general doctrine concerning the Sacraments comes quite close to the Doctrine of the New Church. He calls Baptism "the bath of Regeneration,"[57] teaching that it represents the introduction into the Church through faith and repentance, and that, when these are present, Baptism has an organic influence upon the new birth in Christ.

The Holy Supper he terms "the Supper of the Soul," and says that it represents the life of charity and love, just as Baptism represents faith.[58] He rejects with an equal condemnation all the prevailing notions in regard to the Eucharist,—the magical doctrine of Transubstantiation taught by the Roman Catholics,[59] who pretend that the bread and the wine, by the mere blessing of the priest, change their substance and *become* the actual body and blood of Christ;—the stolid literalism of the Lutherans who insist that the elements *are* the material flesh and blood of Christ, in some way or another, nobody knows or cares how;—and the coldly historical view

[57] R. 484.
[58] R. 344, 502.
[59] The Roman formula "*hoc est corpus*" became "*hocus pocus*" in the ears of the common people, and fitly expresses the humbug of the priestly conjurers.

of Zwingli and Calvin who maintain that the sacred elements merely *represent,* in a commemorative and artificial manner, the flesh and the blood, without having the least idea of the *spiritual* representation of the flesh and the blood.

Neither was Servetus quite clear as to the real significance of the things involved, but he comes remarkably close to the truth. He teaches that "in the Lord's Supper the true eating of the body of Christ is internal and spiritual. The internal eating is demonstrated by the external, and the spiritual by the corporeal. . . . The bread is not only the body of Christ, but the body of Christ is the true bread. And by the bread He makes Himself truly present to us, and as the true bread He feeds and nourishes our internal man. . . . It is the spirit that eats, not the flesh (John 6:35). The instruments of the eating are in the heart,—*faith and charity.*" [60]

6. CHRIST AND THE TRINITY.

That which above all else characterizes and distinguishes the Theology of Servetus from the doctrines of his contemporaries, and that in which above all else he approaches most closely to the "Universal Theology" of the New Church,—is his doctrine concerning the Lord and the Trinity in Him. This has been called a "Christo-centric" Theology, but Tollin

[60] De Regen. L. III. p. 501.

has more fittingly described it as "Pan-Christism,"[61] for Christ, the *Deus-Homo,* was to Servetus not only the Centre but the Whole of all Theology and all Religion.

This doctrine of Christ as the one and only God rings as clear in the first work of the Spaniard as in his last. He was a progressive thinker, and many of his conceptions underwent change and development from time to time, as may be seen from his successive works and letters, but his doctrine concerning Christ remains the same throughout all his writings. But, as Tollin observes, "his Christ was not the Christ of the theological schools; it was the Christ of the Bible and of the Conscience."

The image of Christ stood out to Servetus in every word, nay, every letter of the Scriptures, as also in all things great and small of the created Universe. "Nay," he exclaims, "the very stones cry out unto me: 'There is One God and One Lord, Jesus the Christ.'"[62] "For Him I speak, He alone defends me. This only Master I love. His words ever pierce my bowels. . . . In Christ alone God subsists and is seen; there is no other face or person or hypostasis of God except Christ alone."[63] And consequently all the prayers,—the many beautiful, tender and touching prayers abounding in the works of Servetus,—are one and all addressed directly to

[61] LEHRSYSTEM, Vol. 2, p. 157.

[62] E. 27 *b.*

[63] R. 74.

his Lord Jesus Christ, just as the New Churchman prays at this day, just as the early Christians used to pray, but prayed no longer after the fourth century.

With this intense love of Christ and faith in Him as the only God, Servetus turned with an equally intense hatred against that doctrine which had destroyed the faith in Christ among Christians. Before the true doctrine of the Lord, and the Trinity in Him, could be restored, the old three-personal doctrine must be overthrown and exterminated. Hence his constant battle-cry: *"Deo dante, exterminabimus"!*

In his attacks upon this citadel of the old theology, he first of all points out its utterly unscriptural character. "From the beginning to the end of the Bible," he says, "there is not one single letter supporting these imaginations," [64] and "whatsoever is said of God, if it cannot be proved by the Sacred Scripture, is a lie." [65] At first, indeed, he rejected as unbiblical not only the term "persons," but also the term "Trinity," but in his last work, the RESTITUTION OF CHRISTIANITY, he accepts the term Trinity and shows that this Trinity exists in the person of Christ.

We quote the following as showing how, like Swedenborg, he proved that the idea of three Divine persons is an idea of three gods:

[64] E. 42 *b*. [65] E. 40 *b*.

Those who maintain that there are three substantial persons or hypostases in God, insinuate three Gods, equal by nature. For they propose to us three distinct and different substantial things, and they insist that each one of these things, (or hypostases, as they call it), is God. Hence necessarily they make three equal and distinct Gods. For when these persons or hypostases, different as to thing and number, are one by one predicated of God, it necessarily follows that there are as many subjects as there are predicates, and that according to the number of the persons, so also the number of the gods are multiplied. And though *in words* they predicate one such God to us, yet in *effect* and *fact* they represent to us three Gods in the understanding. For every acute and sincere intellect must see that there are three things proposed for the worship. But *how* these three, of whom each one is God, make one God in number, no one has ever been able to say or to teach. It is therefore left in the spirit and in the understanding an insoluble perplexity and inexplicable confusion, that the three are one, and the one is three. . . . But to set up three Gods equal by nature, this is the highest blasphemy and impiety.[66]

The three imagined *persons* of the Trinity he characterizes in unsparing terms, as "a phantasm of demons, a three-headed Cerberus, an impossible monster," [67] "an invention of Satan to alienate mankind from a knowledge of the true Christ." [68] And the beginning of this abomination which has thoroughly corrupted the Church, and displaced it from its true foundation, he, like Swedenborg, dates from the time when Arius introduced his metaphysical Greek

[66] Quoted by ALLWOERDEN, p. 131, from a speech by Servetus before his judges in Geneva.

[67] R. 700.

[68] R. 22.

speculations about the consubstantiality or non-consubstantiality of the Father and the Son [69],—the time when "the emperor became a monk, and the pope a king"; in other words, from the time of the Council of Nicæa, in the year 325,—"when the Son of God was snatched away from us, when the Church was banished from the earth, and all abominations established by laws." [70]

Servetus realized to the full the incalculable injuries done to the Church by the introduction of this man-made doctrine. To it he ascribed the innumerable heresies and sects which have torn to pieces the Christian Church. To it he ascribed the defeat of the Church in the work of converting the Gentiles, and also the success of the Mohammedan Religion which not only covered Christianity with well merited ridicule, but actually presented a better idea of Christ than the one prevalent among professed Christians. "Every Turk, Scythian, and Barbarian," he laments, "makes sport of your superstitious battle of terms. Is it not terrible that even the lying prophet, Mohammed, has a more biblical view of our Savior, Jesus Christ, than our own Christian liars?" [71] "Nay, what do I say, not only the Mohammedans and the Jews, but the very beasts of the field, would despise us, could they perceive our phantastic idea of God, for all the works of God are praising the *one* Lord." [72]

[69] R. 22. [70] R. 666. [71] E. 42 *b*. [72] E. 43 *b*.

Servetus, however, does not reject the *fact* of a Trinity in God; it is the trinity of *persons* that he is fighting against, not the trinity of Divine Essentials. In maintaining the absolute Unity of God, he steers clear alike of Patripassianism, Sabellianism, Arianism, and Nestorianism. Patripassianism he condemns as a heresy, for it taught that the Father *suffered* together with the Son,—a manifest absurdity, since the Divine cannot suffer either injury or change. Sabellius he condemned as teaching that the three Divine persons were so many different *manifestations* of God, when nevertheless the Father has never manifested Himself as a Person, nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son alone. Arianism he condemned most of all, for it denied the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son, and thus deprived the Lord Jesus Christ of all genuine Divinity. And the Monophysites are equally in error, for they maintain that Christ had and has but one nature, the Divine, thus denying that the Lord is Man as well as God.

Servetus,—alone in the entire history of the Christian Church (before Swedenborg appeared),—discovered an approximately true definition of the Trinity. Building his Theology firmly on the Rock of Ages, and on Him alone, he found that the Scriptures tell of no other Divine *Person* but Jesus Christ. He is the only *Manifestation* of the Infinite God, or the Father, for "No one hath at any time *seen* the

Father. The only begotten Son, He hath made Him manifest." The Father, therefore, is that invisible Divine, which becomes manifest in and as the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Holy Spirit is nothing but the Divine breath and regenerating operation of the Divine thus manifesting itself as Jesus Christ.

In Jesus Christ, therefore, is the *fulness* of the Godhead bodily, as Paul teaches; and Servetus, with his usual keen perception, noticed that the Apostles, when baptizing *in the name of Jesus Christ alone,* actually fulfilled the Lord's last injunction to baptize all nations "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"—for in Christ all these are One.[73]

Instead of trying to bolster up the unbiblical term "persons" by offering possible explanations of the impossible, he frankly states that "it were well if all distinction of persons in the one God were henceforth abandoned and rooted out of the minds of men."[74] And, not contenting himself with mere negations, he offers in the place of the old term and idea, the idea and term of *dispositions* or *modes, i.e.,* manners of accommodation, adaptation, and communication, of the one infinite God in relation to the created universe and in relation to His human children. As the infinite origin of all things, God is called the FATHER. As the first substantial manifestation of this infinite Power, the substance by which and out

[73] R. 24. [74] E. 64.

of which all things were made that were made, God is called the WORD or *Logos*. As this Word made flesh, for the sake of redeeming and saving men, He is called the SON; and as the Divine Operation, by which this Redemption and salvation is *continually* effected with the faithful, He is called the HOLY SPIRIT.[75]

7. THE FATHER, THE INFINITE ESSE.

In his conception of God, Servetus, like Swedenborg, begins with the thought of the Infinite, the Divine itself. "Before creation was, God was; but neither was He Light, nor Word, nor Spirit, but some other ineffable thing; these—the Light, the Word, the Spirit,—are only dispositions, modes or expressions of the pre-existent Deity." [76] This Deity is absolutely One, not an abstract unit or a bare mathematical point, but an infinite ocean of substance which fashions all forms, and bears them within itself. In Himself He is altogether incomprehensible, and He can be comprehended, represented, and thought of only in an image, namely, in the figure of Christ as the Person of the Word.[77] The name Jehovah is to be applied exclusively to this One and Eternal God; the other Divine names, such as El, Adonai, Elohim, etc., are sometimes applied also to exalted but finite beings, such as the angels,

[75] R. 704. [76] DIAL. II p. 4. [77] E. 102 *b*.

but in an infinite degree to Jesus Christ.[78] "In the Trinity the Father is the whole substance and the only God, from which all degrees and forms have come forth." [79] "God is eternal, One, and Indivisible; in Himself He is inscrutable, but makes known His Being in and through creation; so that not only in every living thing, but also in every lifeless thing, there is an aspect of the Deity." [80] "In the universal and all-forming essence of God there are an infinite number of Divine essentials and modes, the architypes or forms and ideas of all things, contained and represented in an ineffable manner from all eternity." [81] "God Himself is the essence of all things, and all things are in Him." [82] "It is God who gives *Esse* or essential being to every existing thing,—to inanimate creation, to living creatures in general, and to man in special." [83]

Being the *Esse* of all things, God is also the substance of everything, and the only substance. God created the world out of Himself, of His own substance, and as Essence He essentiates all things. All finite things thus receive in a finite measure of the Divine Essence and substance; but in the body and spirit of Jesus Christ alone it was received without measure.[84]

This daring conception of God as the *only* substance naturally laid Servetus open to the charge of

[78] R. 65. [80] Dial. I: 4. [82] R. 127. [84] Dial. II.
[79] E. 28 *b*. [81] R. 129, 161. [83] Dial. II.

Pantheism. "His idea of God," says Prof. Emerton, "was of a being so completely pervading all life that it was hardly to be distinguished from the things it so utterly filled and animated. The handiest word to describe an idea of this sort is 'pantheism,' and in fact the theology of Servetus has often been thus described." How unfounded is this charge, which has also been brought against Swedenborg, is evident from the oft-repeated statement of Servetus that God nevertheless is "separate," *i.e.*, distinct from all created things.[85] Servetus here speaks of the *substance* of God as the only substance, and of the presence of God as omnipresent, but he also states that God is above all space and above all time, and he nowhere denies that the *forms* of creation are *finite forms* of the Infinite substance; being finite, they cannot be confounded with the Infinite. Calvin, of course, here saw his opportunity to create an unfavorable impression of Servetus. The latter, at his last trial, had affirmed that the substance of God is omnipresent and contains all things, whereupon Calvin asked him if then, when we step on the sidewalk, we trample God under our feet? Servetus replied that the substance of God is in all things as the only substance, being present, therefore, also in wood and stone. Calvin then asked if the devil himself was of the substance of God? At this Servetus is said to have smiled, replying, "Can you

[85] Dial. II. p. 10.

then doubt it? To me it is a universal principle that everything has come into being from the communication of God, and that nature is the substantial spirit of God." [86] This conversation is reported by Calvin in a letter to his chief assistant-inquisitor, Farel.

8. THE LOGOS, THE SOUL OF CHRIST.

"Out of Himself the invisible God at Creation brought forth the visible world, as it were out of darkness. The Word stood forth (*exstitit*) out of the inner spirit of God. I call it an ex-istence, for God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light." [87]

This Word, or *Logos,* was not an empty sound or articulation, but an uncreated and eternal Light, *standing forth,* not created,—"the eternal Thought of God, the eternal Reason, the ideal world, the architype of all things created,—the Divine Wisdom in God, like a certain intelligent soul contemplating all things within Himself." And not only was the *Logos* thus the manifestation of God, but it was God Himself standing forth in all His Divine fulness, as the first expression in outward form of the Divine Activity.[88]

This creative Logos, however, was not a merely mechanical or inorganic power, for as the primeval

[86] TRECHSEL p. 226.
[87] R. 704.
[88] DIAL. I p. 206; II p. 284; EPIST. 3 p. 582. APOL. p. 733.

Light or Word shone forth in the beginning from God, it inherently possessed and reflected *the human form,*[89] for in it was already manifested *the form of the future Christ,* not ideally alone, but actually and visibly; and from this original type and modus of Divine Manifestation proceed all other modifications of the Deity. Nay, even before the Incarnation, the Logos actually *was* Christ, as to His Spirit and as to His Soul, wanting only a body of flesh.[90]

Compare with this teaching the statement of Swedenborg "that in the Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, before the assumption of the Human in the world, *the two prior degrees* existed actually, and the third degree *in potency,* such as these degrees also are with the angels; but that after His assumption of the Human in the world, He put on also the third or natural degree and thereby became a man like a man in the world." (DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM, 233.)

"For," continues Servetus, "even before the Incarnation, God on all occasions ever acted in a human manner, represented Himself to man in the form of a Man, spoke as a Man, and was seen as a Man by the patriarchs,—but through the instrumentality of angels."[91] "Christ, therefore [as the Word before the Incarnation], is the whole substantial Deity and the primary uncreated Light itself. He Himself is Jehovah and the beginning of all natural

[89] R. 690. [90] R. 693. [91] R. 691.

things."[92] "The soul of Christ, as the primeval Word, is the architype of all things, the representative world-soul (*anima mundi*),"[93] "the eternal ocean of ideas."[94] As such, also, He was the creator and ordainer of all things, and all things, whether heavenly or earthly, bodily or spiritual, consist in Him. He created the matters of the elements, He mingled them together, and He it was who out of His own treasure-house of light endowed them substantially with forms of light."[95] The world, he concludes, came into being through Christ as the Logos, and solely in order to admit of His becoming a Man in the Flesh, and it has no significance whatever apart from Him who was to appear in the world and reign over it forever.

It will be seen from these extracts how completely without foundation is the assertion that Servetus denied the eternal pre-existence of Christ. His whole Theology, which has appeared so obscure and complicated to the learned world, is on the contrary very simple,—nothing but the plain teaching in John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him there was not anything made that was made. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of man. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His

[92] R. 282. [93] R. 268. [94] R. 278. [95] De Trin. L. IV. p. 151.

glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth."

It was not the idea of the eternal Christ that Servetus rejected, but the idea of a Son BORN from eternity, a second *person* of the Deity, born from the first person, yet co-eternal with him! "The expression 'Son'," he says, "does not properly stand for the 'Word,' but always for a 'Man'," [96] "Not a single passage of the whole Sacred Scripture can be brought forward, in which the term 'Son' is used in any other sense than that of *a Man who is a Son.*" [97] When, in the Old Testament, a Son of God is spoken of, it is always a *future* Son of God that is predicted, a Son that was to be born *in time,* and in this world. The Logos itself, the Soul of Christ, is not the Son of God, but is God Himself in His first manifestation; but this Logos actually *became* the Son of God when it appeared on earth as a man born of a woman.

This doctrine, so eminently biblical and rational, was the crux of the offense of Servetus against the prevailing Theology of his day, for it destroyed at a blow the notion of a prearranged Atonement by an eternal Son to an eternal Father. And it was chiefly because of this doctrine that Servetus was accused, condemned, and executed. It was this doctrine, finally, that Servetus most stoutly defended throughout his trial, and which he asserted with his last

[96] R. 90. [97] R. 689.

expiring breath amidst the flames, in his cry: "Jesus, thou Son of the eternal God, have mercy upon me."

9. THE INCARNATION.

It was this "Logos," then, which, as Divine seed, descended into Mary's womb and there covered itself with a body of human flesh. Like Swedenborg, Servetus looks upon the virgin conception as, indeed, a Miracle, but not as anything contrary to the natural laws of order. "With Christ, as with every man," he says, "the soul was from the father, and the body from the mother alone." [98] "The Logos was the seed from which Christ was conceived. Indeed, every other seed has its potency from the seed of the Word." [99] "In the soul itself lies hidden the formative *idea* of the body," as the future plant lies hidden in the vegetable seed.[100] "As in every conception, the formative seed or plasmic potency creates for itself a material body in the mother's womb, even so the Word of God, as formative faculty, formed a body for itself in Mary's womb." [101] "Christ, like every other man, took from the maternal bosom of Mary the matter of his flesh. The earthly matter was from the mother alone." [102] "But, different from other men, in the conception of Christ it was

[98] R. 254, TRECHSEL 131. [99] R. 251. [100] R. 216. [101] R. 679. [102] R. 250.

the Word of God *alone,* as containing in itself all seminal power substantially, that made the natural dew for the conception of Christ in the womb of the virgin." [103] "The Divine Logos took the place of the paternal seed, uniting itself livingly with the maternal blood in the embryo," [104] "mingling itself with the blood of the virgin, and thus transforming the human matter into God." [105]

Thus, "by the Incarnation, God and man were henceforth One, in one flesh." [106] "The man Christ was so penetrated by the Deity that He became God in his flesh and blood, in his soul, body and spirit. He was such while in the embryo, and continued to bear the substantial form of God even when in the grave. He himself is the Word and Wisdom of God, and this very light of the face of Christ is to us the intellectual light and the idea of all things. He is the speech of God visible and audible at once to the sense and to the understanding." [107] "As, therefore, the Father is true God, so hath He given His true Godhead to His only Son in a unique manner, and has caused the Son to be true God." [108] "When God breathed into Christ His own soul, then at the same time He breathed into Him the whole fulness of God without measure." [109] "Christ, therefore, is not only *consubstantial* with the Father, but He

[103] R. 260.
[104] De Trin. Lib. V, p. 250.
[105] R. 268.
[106] R. 267.
[107] De Trin. Lib. V. 138.
[108] R. 16.
[109] R. 231.

alone *is the whole substance of God.*" [110] "Christ is God by natural birth, naturally born of the substance of God. The whole Deity of the Father, the worship of God, and the aspect of God, exist in Christ, the true God." [111] "The soul of Christ is God; the body of Christ is God; the spirit of Christ is God; and therefore the whole of Christ is God." [112]

10. THE GLORIFICATION.

While the Divine, as to its whole substance, dwelt in the human body of Christ from its very conception, it did not, however, at once take possession of the whole of that body, but the Glorification of the human body was a gradual process.[113] For "the body from the mother included corruptible elements, which were not fully laid aside until the resurrection." The resurrection of Christ was regarded by Servetus as the *climax* of the Glorification, even as he regarded the Incarnation of the Word as the climax of the self-finitization of God.[114]

As to the actual process of the Glorification, Servetus, indeed, possessed only very general ideas, and we have found but little in his works in regard to the Lord's temptations, arising from the evil inclinations of the maternal heredity, or in regard to the

[110] E. 107 *b*.
[111] R. 16.
[112] R. 231.
[113] De Trin. Lib. V. 182; Dial. II, 267.
[114] R. 279.

combats and victories of the Acquired Human, or how the Lord first made His human the Divine Truth itself, and then united to it the Divine Good itself. He speaks, however, of Christ first becoming *Elohim* and afterwards *Jehovah,* which may indicate a certain faint conception of the two universal stages of the Glorification, corresponding to the two stages of Reformation and Regeneration with finite man. Servetus makes constant use of the term "Glorification," and describes it as an *interpenetration* of the Word into the flesh, and as a transformation of the flesh into Divine Substance.[115] "The Word, indeed, became flesh, and yet remained the Word. By the Incarnation the Word was not annihilated as such, nor was it *changed* into flesh by a transformation of substance; but it was the matter of the flesh that was transformed by the Word, so that the combined result was one Flesh-Word (*caro-verbum*)."[116] "Thus the substance of the Word participated in the transformed flesh, so that both became one Hypostasis, one substance, one body, and one real Man. *One throughout* is the man Jesus Christ, containing in Himself the Divine and the human nature."[117] "At the resurrection Christ had acquired to Himself all that which before belonged to the Father alone: Divine Nature, Divine Substance, even as to His body, the same eternity, Jehovah-nature, the power of the Creator Himself."[118] Servetus, therefore, in

[115] Dial. II. p. 256 [116] R. 267. [117] R. 267. [118] R. 370.

his doctrine concerning the Lord, starts out with the confession: "Jesus is the Christ," and he ends with the adoring acknowledgment: "Jesus is the Almighty Creator, God, the true Jehovah." [119]

In consequence of this acknowledgment Servetus utterly denied the absurd Nicæan figment about two separate natures in the glorified Christ,—one human, and the other Divine,—forever distinct and heterogeneous, and united only by a so-called "hypostatic union." On the contrary, "Christ consists not of two natures, but He partakes of both natures, and as to both He is consubstantial with God." [120] "In the body of Christ the Divine and the Human were so inseparably and internally mingled, that even the animal nature of the body partook of the Divine substance." [121] "In Christ the nature of God and the nature of man remain in one substance." [122] "One man is Jesus Christ, containing in Himself Divine and human nature." [123] And, "even as the body of Christ, so also is His soul at the same time Human and Divine in inseparable unity." [124]

Servetus even went so far as to assert that "Christ, by the Resurrection, was glorified into even greater glory than the glory of the Word before the Incarnation," and he based this doctrine upon the indisputable fact that the *Gifts* which proceed from the Risen One are greater than those which proceeded

[119] R. 268.
[120] Dial. II. p. 269.
[121] *Ibid.* 256.
[122] *Ibid.*
[123] R. 267.
[124] Dial. II. p. 261.

from the Word not yet made flesh.[125] These Gifts were the Redemption of mankind, the aspect of a visible Human God, the renewal of the universal Macrocosm, and the regeneration of man—"according to the pattern of the Glorification of Christ"—by the communication of the Holy Spirit,—a Spirit which "*was not yet*" before Jesus was glorified.

"The "renewal of the Cosmos" was a daring but magnificent conception quite peculiar to Servetus. Through the fall of mankind, not only was human nature defiled, but at the same time the whole of the material universe. With the entrance of Sin into the world the very elements became injurious. Heat as well as cold began to be harmful to man. A certain defilement of the elementary fire took place through the devil,[126] and the devil defiled even the air and the water. If Adam had not sinned, there would have been no stormy clouds and terrifying lightning, but God would have continued to moisten the earth by the simple dew of heaven as in Paradise.[127] With powerful imagery Servetus describes the glory of nature as originally created by God, and the terrible change introduced into the universe by the deliberate act of man.[128] But through the Glorification of Jesus, and on the day of the Resurrection, not only Heaven but the earth and the whole world were made new. Not only was a new spiritual kingdom introduced, but a new creation of the world

[125] R. 279. [126] R. 390. [127] R. 391. [128] TOLLIN 2: 196.

took place through and in Christ,—in short, *every thing* was made new through a new universal Covenant,[129] so that the whole universe was born again through Christ.[130]

11. THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Since there is not in the Godhead any tri-personal Trinity, the Holy Spirit is not a separate Divine Person or Being *per se,* proceeding either from the Father *through* the Son (according to the Greek Church), or from the Father *and* the Son (according to the Roman Catholic Creed). Nor is the Spirit any supposed metaphysical inter-relation between the Father and the Son or an "immanent operation" within the essence of God,[131] but it is simply a Divine Disposition or Modus, accommodated on the one hand to the created universe, and on the other hand to the spirit of angel and of man.[132]

From the outset Servetus draws a clear-cut distinction between the Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is called the Spirit of God in a universal sense, and when it operates *externally,* but it is called the Holy Spirit in a special sense, and when it is active *internally* in enlightening and sanctifying the spirit of man.[133] In other words, "the essence of God, when it *manifests* itself to the world, is called

[129] R. 552. Tollin 2. 196.
[130] R. 295.
[131] E. 62 *b.*
[132] E. 85 *a.*
[133] R. 705.

the 'Word'; when it is *communicated* to the world, it is called the 'Spirit.'" [134]

As to the former, the Spirit of God, Servetus teaches that "it is the universal agent; it is in the air we breathe and is the very breath of life; it moves the heavenly bodies, sends out the winds from their quarters, takes up and stores the water in the clouds, and pours it out as rain to fertilize the earth." [135] "It is the presence and power of God projected into creation, animating and actuating all that is therein, man more especially than aught else." [136] "As there can be no speaking without the sending forth of breath, so also the Spirit of God is the breath of God, proceeding from Him when He sends forth His Word." [137] "As He has created all things through His Word, so He has ordained, vivified, and energized all things through His Spirit," [138] "the spirit of life, which, proceeding from the Logos, fills all creation as the world-soul." [139] "As nothing takes place without the Word of God, so also there is not a plant or stone possessing the least virtue or quality without this Spirit." [140] "In the very substance of the wind God Himself is operating, so that in a sense we can touch Him with our hands, and without His Spirit the universe would be nothing but a mass of dead matter." [141] "Man becomes a living and immortal

[134] R. 163.
[135] R. 192.
[136] E. 57 *b*.
[137] E. 68 *a*.
[138] *Ibid.*
[139] DIAL. II. p. 268.
[140] E. 66 *a*.
[141] E. 60 *b*.

being when he first begins to breathe at birth, because the atmosphere is the Spirit of God." [142] "And this Spirit is not only *from* God, but it *is* God Himself in all His fulness, operating immediately in the world, and everything is full of His Spirit." [143]

As to the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, Servetus observes that this term is used very seldom in the Old Testament, but very frequently in the New, and this was because the Jews thought nothing of internal sanctification, but only of external purifications.[144] The Holy Spirit, indeed, appeared even before the birth of the Lord, but always then in the form and shape of *an angel* speaking and acting in the name of God.[145] But, though appearing through the angel, the Holy Spirit was by no means the angel himself.[146] "The angel himself was not the Holy Spirit, but was only the servitor for the ministry of the Spirit." [147]

But "the first complete exhibition of the Holy Spirit was in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom, together with the Logos, it assumed human nature, and thus, united with the natural breath of life, it formed the Soul of Christ." [148] This human Spirit of Christ is the true and complete "Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit, and is communicated solely through the breath of Christ." [149] "Thus, as the Word of

[142] Dial. II. p. 259.
[143] E. 66 *b*.
[144] E. 65 *b*.
[145] R. 27.
[146] E. 85 *a*.
[147] R. 184.
[148] De Trin. 182.
[149] R. 190.

God was made Man, so the Spirit of God became the Spirit of a Man, hypostatically and substantially,[150] and having become human through Christ, it can be communicated by Christ to those who believe in Him in the Holy Supper and through the bath of Regeneration." [151] And "our own human spirit, having become inter-penetrated by the Spirit of Christ, then becomes as it were a new holy spirit. It is this inter-penetration of the glorified Spirit of Christ that is the real cause and security for our own resurrection into glory. In short, the Holy Spirit is the Divine motion or agitation in the human soul, and beside this there cannot properly be said to be any Holy Spirit." [152]

12. THE MISSION OF SERVETUS.

Without attempting to dogmatize upon the subject, we may be permitted to offer some suggestions as to the meaning of the apparently mysterious mission of Servetus to the Christian world. To a student of Swedenborg's works, it is manifest that Servetus came as near to the Doctrine of genuine truth as could be possible to any man, short of an immediate Divine Revelation. That he enjoyed an unusual light, or the inspiration of a unique perception when reading the Word, seems self-evident. To us he bears a striking resemblance to Swedenborg during the latter's preparatory career. Both were laymen,—

[150] DIAL. II. p. 267. [151] E. 85 *a*. [152] *Ibid.* 116.

spiritual philosophers arising out of the "common herd of the laity," to reprove the priesthood for its sins. Both were devout and simple Christians, lovers of Christ and believers in the Word. Both, also, were great scientists, founding their Theology upon the exact sciences. Both were alone in this world, without the joys of wife and family. Both were ignored or misunderstood, hated by Catholics and Protestants alike. Both were ages in advance of their own times, and both looked to future times and future generations for appreciation of their doctrines.

Here, however, the analogy ceases. The ends and purposes of Swedenborg's mission are well known, but those of Servetus still remain within the realms of hypothesis. What is the meaning of his appearance and his work? Why was this unique phenomenon permitted to appear with the genuine truth of the Word, only to disappear again, almost without leaving a trace in the sands of time? Scarcely had he opened his mouth before he was howled down by the enraged mob of theologians, and when again he lifted up his voice, it was stifled by the smoke of the heretics' pyre. With the exception of a few copies, all his books were destroyed, and for ages,—we might say, almost until our own days,—he has had scarcely a single sympathetic and intelligent reader. Apparently he has exercised no influence whatever upon the development of theological thought in the Christian Church. Tollin, indeed, asserts that the doc-

trines of Servetus were widely spread in Holland, and that they exercised a strong influence upon Descartes, whose system, he says, bears a strong resemblance to that of Servetus,[153] but no evidence is produced to support this assertion.

Surely he was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness"! And this thought suggests something of a solution of the problem. In some way, unknown to us at present, he was undoubtedly a John the Baptist preparing the way for the Lord in His Second Coming. John represents the letter of the Word preparing the way for the Word Incarnate. And Michael Servetus undoubtedly represents the genuine *truth* of the literal sense, for this is what he taught. Like John he *saw* the Lord coming. He recognized the existence of the Internal Sense, but was not himself able to open the shoe-latches of that Sense. He appears to us like an angel sent from Heaven to preach *Repentance* to the Church of the Reformers, to warn them and guide them into the right path, where they might be prepared to welcome and receive the Lord in His soon approaching Coming. But the warning was unheeded; the messenger, like John, was done to death, and the Lord Himself, when He came, was rejected with scorn and hatred.

John, however, was permitted to have direct contact with Jesus, but Servetus does not *appear* to have

[153] Lehrsystem, vol. 3 p. 56.

had any direct influence upon the Revelation given to the New Church. Swedenborg himself does not anywhere mention Servetus, and we may assert with absolute certainty that he had never read any of the works of the Spaniard, for the original editions had been destroyed with the exception of two or three copies of each, and these were preserved in libraries which Swedenborg never visited during the formative period of his life. Moreover, they have never been translated into any living tongue, and the reprints of the originals were not published until many years after Swedenborg's death. Finally, Swedenborg himself stated expressly that he was never permitted, by the guiding hand of Providence, to read works of systematic Theology. His interests, during the greater part of his preparatory career, lay in other fields,—in Mechanics, Geometry, Chemistry, Geology, Mineralogy, Cosmology, and Psychology. But the philosophico-theological system which appears first in Swedenborg's work On the Infinite (1734), and afterwards in his physiological works, had been conceived as to its essential outlines in his earlier years, and was based not only upon the exact sciences, but most especially upon the hearing and reading of the Word in his childhood. The astonishing similarity between the system of Servetus and Swedenborg's earlier system is explicable, therefore, only by the fact that both started from the same premises and arrived at the same general conclusions.

This earlier philosophico-theological system of Swedenborg was the matrix into which afterwards the jewel of the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem could descend by an immediate Divine Revelation.

"Among them that are born of women there hath not risen one greater than John the Baptist; yet he that is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he" (MATTH. 11:11). And so also may we say, in all reverence, that among all the teachers of the Christian Church,—ancient, medieval, and modern,—there has not risen one greater in the perception of truth than Michael Servetus. Nevertheless, the least of the teachings in the Doctrine of the New Jerusalem bears a Divine impress and fulness, a Divine Authority of self-evidencing light, that is infinitely greater than the correct but more or less hypothetical conclusions drawn by Servetus from the letter of the Word.

While freely admitting this incontrovertible fact, we cannot deny that the human theology of Servetus still remains cousin-german to the Divine Theology of the New Church, and in *some* way the former must have served to prepare the way for the latter. May it not be that the Lord opened to Servetus the genuine truths of the literal sense of the Word in order to prepare *some one* on the earth for future leadership in that battle of the Armageddon which was soon to take place in the spiritual world? Ser-

vetus himself suggests something like this, hoping to become, not *the* leader, indeed, but one of the earliest champions in that battle, and he almost playfully alludes to his own name,—Michael—as significant of his mission. We must quote here from his letter (to Abel Pepin), written six years before his death:

> Behold, therefore, how your Gospel is confounded by the Law! Your Gospel is without one God, without true faith, without good works. Instead of the one God ye have a three-headed Cerberus; instead of true faith ye have a fatal dream; and good works ye call empty pictures. The faith in Christ is with you a mere pretense, effecting nothing. Man is to you a mere stock, and God is to you a chimera of the unfree will, (*servi arbitrii chimæra*). Regeneration by the heavenly water ye do not acknowledge, but hold it as a fable. The kingdom of the heavens ye have closed before men as an imaginary thing to be shut off from us. Woe unto you, woe, woe! By this third letter I have been willing to warn you to think better, but I shall warn no longer. It has offended you, perhaps, that I am mingling myself into this battle of Michael, and that I desire to mingle you into it as well. But ponder diligently upon that passage and you will see that it is *men* who will fight there, exposing their souls to death for the blood and testimony of Jesus Christ. Do you not see that it is treated there of the Church of Christ, now fled from the earth for so many years? . . . Therefore the battle will follow, and the time is at hand, as He saith. . . . That I am about to die for this cause, I know for certain; but I do not lose courage on this account, in order that I may become a disciple like unto his Master. This I grieve about, that ye will not permit me to amend certain passages in my writings which are in Calvin's hands. Farewell, and do not expect any further letters from me.
>
> I shall stand upon my guard, I shall meditate, and shall see what will be said.
>
> For He will come, He will certainly come, and will not tarry.

In many other places Servetus expresses more definitely his expectation of the Last Judgment, the Second Coming of the Lord, and a New and crowning Church. "Even now," he says, "heaven and earth are being moved against the Dragon and Antichrist; already a just faith in Christ is beginning to be understood, and the worthy Lamb is beginning to open the Book that has been closed by so many seals." [154] As to himself, Servetus ardently hoped to be allowed a place in the army of Michael as one of the earliest champions in that holy battle, even though he fully expected to be done to death on the field.[155] "By this combat the genuine Church of the Lord, which exists now invisible in Heaven, will descend to the earth and become visible. But it will not be established by worldly weapons, nor will evil men be prevented from mixing themselves into it; such are an inevitable part of the external Church, and are useful and necessary for the purification of the good. Nevertheless, the presence of the evil, and the resulting sufferings and persecutions, will not be able to prevent the heavenly joy of the true members of this new and celestial Church." [156] There would, he prophesies, be a twofold battle,—one in *Heaven,* where the archangel Michael, with his hosts of angels, would overthrow the guardian spirits of the papal kingdom of Antichrist. The other battle would take place *on the earth,* among the members

[154] Apol. 718–720. [155] Epist. 20, p. 628 [156] *Ibid.*

of that new Church, where the evil would be assisted by the kingdom of Antichrist, while the good would be assisted from above by the Saints, "and then there will be a new sending forth of the Paraclete who will give a new consolation after the new desolation." [157]

We do not know for certain, of course, but we may at least be permitted to surmise that the mission for which Michael Servetus was being prepared during his brief and suffering life in this world, was the office of teaching the genuine truths of the Word to the simple souls "under the altar" in the other world, who were to be liberated at the Last Judgment from the dominion of the "imaginary heavens" of the Catholic and Protestant Churches. This Last Judgment, which was effected in the spiritual world in the year 1757, was not a sudden event, for nothing whatever, great or small, is effected without previous PREPARATION.

[157] EPIST. 20:628. SIGN. ANTICHRIST 30. R. 716.

NOTE.

While the present little work was in press we received a copy of Dr. William Osler's brochure on MICHAEL SERVETUS (London, Henry Frowde, 1909, pp. 35). We learn from it that a German translation of the CHRISTIANISMI RESTITUTIO by Dr. Bernhard Spiess appeared in 1895 (2nd edition, Wiesbaden, Chr. Limbarth); and that the Servetus bibliography is fully given, up to 1890, in Prof. A. V. D. Linde's MICHAEL SERVETUS (Groningen, 1891).

Dr. Osler, though writing in a liberal and sympathetic vein, refrains from any attempt to analyze the theology of Servetus. "Judged by his age," Dr. Osler observes, "Servetus was a rank heretic, and as deserving of death as any ever tied to a stake. We can scarcely call him a martyr of the Church.—What Church would own him?"

What Church, indeed?

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